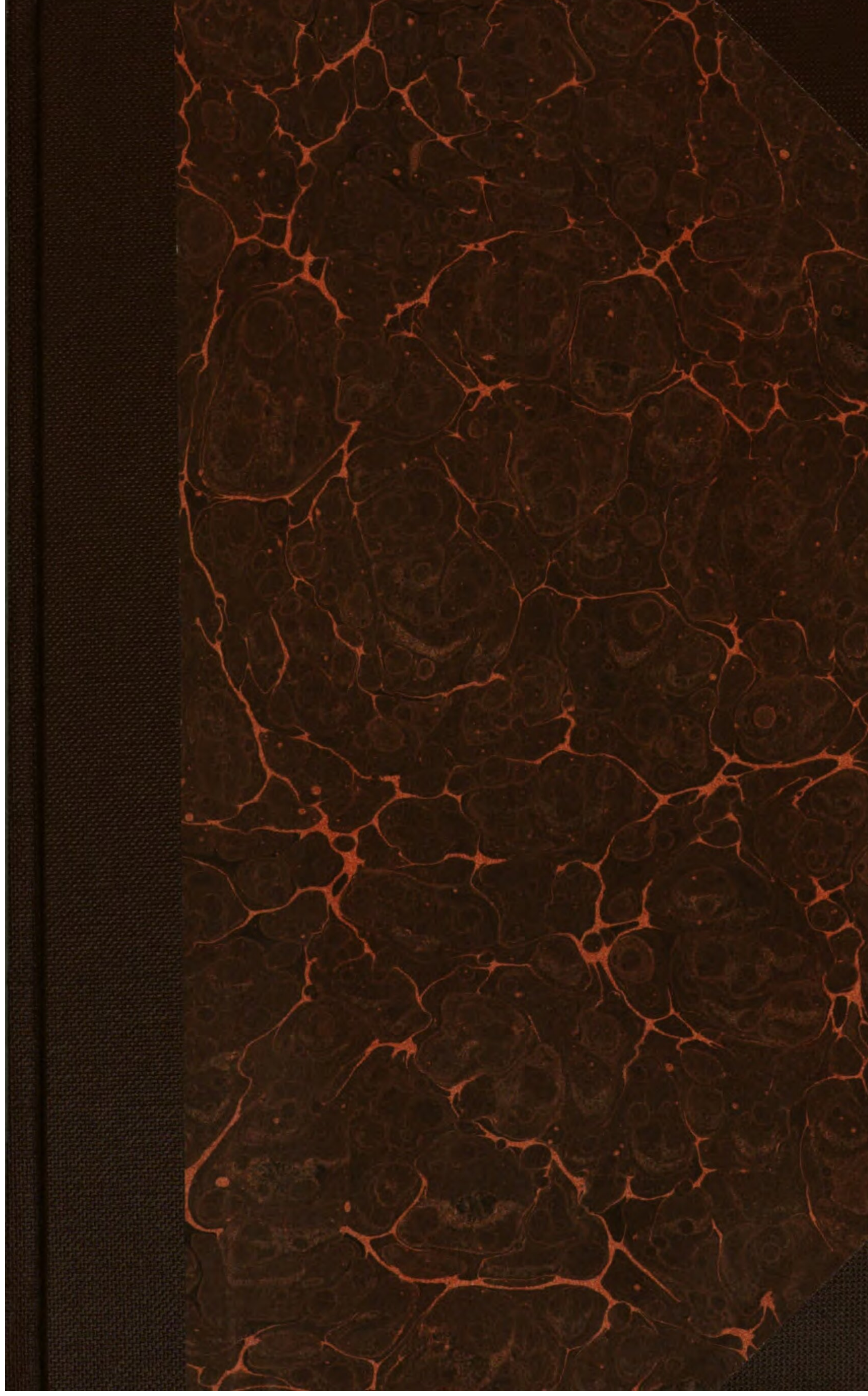




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THE
LIFE AND OPINIONS
OF
JOHN DE WYCLIFFE, D.D.

ILLUSTRATED PRINCIPALLY FROM HIS

Unpublished Manuscripts;

WITH

A PRELIMINARY VIEW OF THE PAPAL SYSTEM, AND OF THE STATE OF
THE PROTESTANT DOCTRINE IN EUROPE,

TO THE

COMMENCEMENT OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

BY

ROBERT VAUGHAN.

VOL. II.

SECOND EDITION,

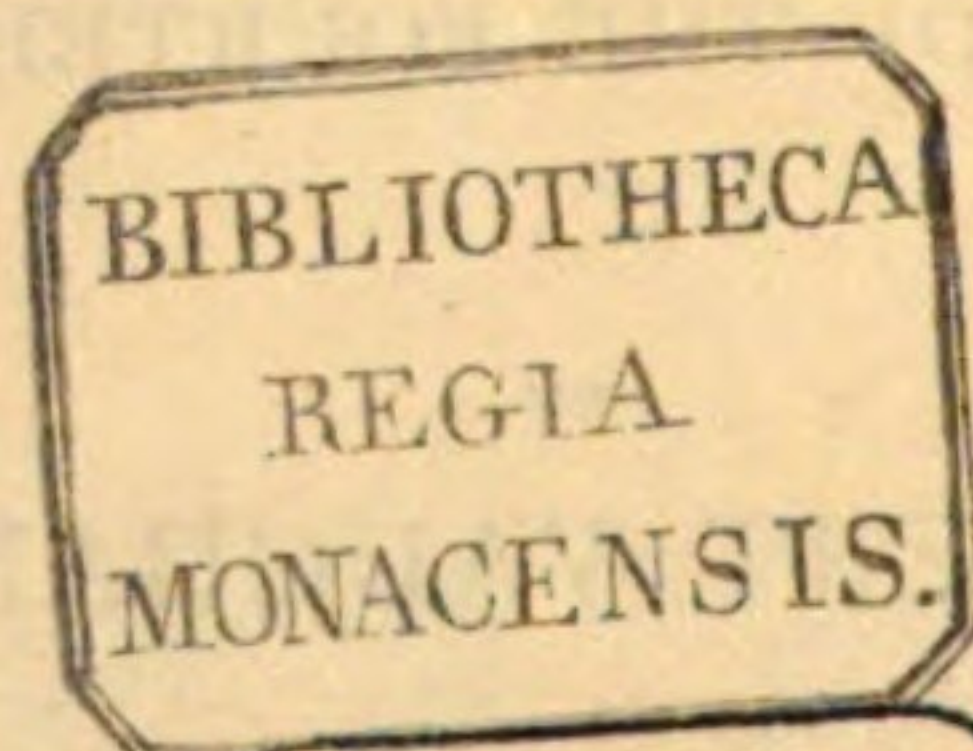
MUCH IMPROVED.

“ Quod si deficient vires, audacia certe
Laus erit; in magnis et voluisse sat est.”
PROPERTIUS.

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THE
LIFE OF WYCLIFFE.

CHAPTER I.

ORIGIN AND EFFECTS OF THE PAPAL SCHISM.—WYCLIFFE'S TRACT "ON
"THE SCHISM OF THE POPES," AND OTHER REFERENCES TO THAT EVENT.
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TURE—THE RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT—THE DOCTRINES PECULIAR TO
THE GOSPEL—AND THE VARIOUS OBLIGATIONS, AND THE MEANS CON-
DUCING, TO RELIGIOUS DEVOTEDNESS.

THE residence of the pontiffs during seventy CHAP.
years at Avignon, was described by the Italians I.
as a second Babylonish captivity. That capti-
vity, if such it may be called, had indeed a ten-
dency to moderate the papal claims; but it was
far from being the most serious feature of that
disgrace which accompanied the representatives
of St. Peter on returning to the ancient seat of
their authority. On the death of Gregory the
eleventh, in 1378, the cardinals assembled to elect
his successor; but the Roman populace, aware
that three-fourths of the conclave were French-
men, and indignant that the vacant honour had

Origin and
effects of
the papal
schism.

CHAP. I. — been so frequently conferred on ecclesiastics of that nation, gathered tumultuously around the place of meeting, and uttered the most alarming menaces with a view to secure the suffrage of the electors in favour of an Italian. The cardinals trembled for their safety, and immediately pronounced Bartholomew de Pregnano, a Neapolitan, and then archbishop of Bari, as the object of their choice. The new pontiff assumed the name of Urban the sixth; but his conduct soon became such as to exasperate his enemies and alienate his friends. From this cause, or from national partialities, some of the leading cardinals retired from Rome to Anagni; and at Fondi, a city of Naples, they chose their brother of Geneva to be the successor of Gregory, and he was immediately proclaimed as Clement the seventh. To justify this bold measure, it was pleaded that the election of Urban was the result of intimidation, and accordingly invalid. France, and her allies, including Spain, Sicily, and Cyprus, acknowledged the authority of Clement; while England, and the rest of Europe, adhered to that of Urban.¹ “And which of these two,” observes Mosheim, “is to be considered as the true and lawful pope, is to this day matter of doubt, nor will the records and writings alleged by the contending parties enable us to adjust that point with any certainty.”²

But whatever were the *merits* of this controversy, its *effects* were by no means doubtful. Through the next half century, the church had two or three different heads at the same time;

¹ Mosheim, iii. 326, 327.

² Ibid.

each of the contending popes forming plots, and thundering out anathemas against their competitors. “The distress and calamity of these times” is said to have been “beyond all power of description; for not to insist on the perpetual contentions and wars between the factions of the several popes, by which multitudes lost their fortunes and lives, all sense of religion was extinguished in most places, and profligacy arose to a most scandalous excess. The clergy, while they vehemently contended which of the reigning popes was the true successor of Christ, were so excessively corrupt as to be no longer studious to keep up even the appearance of religion or decency; and in consequence of all this, many plain, well-meaning people, who concluded that no one could possibly partake of eternal life unless united with the vicar of Christ, were overwhelmed with doubt, and were plunged into the deepest distress of mind.”³ And thus, also, it was, that multitudes were prepared to doubt whether the supremacy claimed by the pontiffs, since it could become involved in such fearful uncertainty, could really be an article of faith or discipline so momentous as had been commonly supposed. Wycliffe, whose escape from the vengeance of the clergy, must be attributed in a great degree to the distractions occasioned by this event, was fully aware of the aid which it might be made to confer on his efforts as a reformer.

The controversy had no sooner commenced, than he published a tract intitled,—“On the

Wycliffe's tract, “On the Schism of the Popes.”

³ Mosheim, iii. 328.

CHAP. "Schism of the Popes,"⁴ in which he adverts to
I. — this dispute as having divided the hierarchy against itself, and as presenting a powerful inducement to attempt the destruction of those laws and customs, which had served so greatly to corrupt the christian priesthood, and to afflict the whole christian community. The endowments of the church, whether claimed by the pontiffs, or by the national clergy, he names as a principal cause of the degeneracy of both; and the property entrusted to the stewardship of churchmen, he affirms to be capable, generally, of a more just, and of a far less dangerous application. To effect this new appropriation of the wealth, which it is said had been frequently ill acquired, and as frequently worse employed, the appeal made is not to the passions of the few or the many, but to the sacred responsibilities of the sovereigns and rulers of Christendom. And that this exhortation might not be in vain, he renews his attack upon those superstitions from which the undue influence of the clergy had derived its being and continuance. Instead of conceding that the power of the clergy, or of the pope, over the disembodied spirit, must ever regulate its destiny, he contends, that when correctly exercised, it is merely ministerial; and that inasmuch as the decisions of these men were frequently opposed to moral propriety, and to the known will of God, they were frequently to be viewed as the mere assumptions of human weakness or passion, from which no evil should be

⁴ MS. Trinity College, Dublin, class C. tab. 3, No. 12, p. 193—208.

apprehended. His advice, therefore, is, “Trust CHAP.
“we in the help of Christ on this point, for he I.
“hath begun already to help us graciously, in
“that he hath clove the head of Antichrist, and
“made the two parts fight against each other.
“For it is not doubtful, that the sin of the popes,
“which hath been so long continued, hath
“brought in this division.” Should the rival
pontiffs continue to lance their anathemas against
each other, or should either prevail, a serious
wound is believed to be inflicted, and it is urged
accordingly, that “emperors, and kings, should
“help in this cause, to maintain God’s law, to
“recover the heritage of the church, and to de-
“stroy the foul sins of clerks, saving their per-
“sons. Thus should peace be established, and
“simony destroyed.” As to the infallibility of
the popes, he remarks, that there is nothing in
the suffrage of princes or cardinals to impart any
such attribute to erring man. On this point, he
observes, “the children of the fiend should learn
“their logic, and their philosophy well, lest they
“prove heretical by a false understanding of the
“law of Christ.” Except the person elected to an
ecclesiastical office shall possess the virtues which
bespeak him a servant of Christ, the most vaunted
forms of investing him with that dignity are
declared to be vain. Among heresies, he affirms,
that “there is no greater, than for a man to
“believe that he is absolved from his sin, if he
“give money, or because a priest layeth his
“hand on the head, and saith I absolve thee.
“For thou must be sorrowful in thy heart,” he
adds, “or else God absolveth thee not.” In the

CHAP. same treatise, the necessity of confession to a
 I. — priest is denied no less distinctly than the received doctrine on the power of the keys. And having thus wrested the weapons from the hands of churchmen, which had been wielded with so much success against human liberty, he calls upon the secular authorities to attempt the long-needed reformation of the ecclesiastical body, both in its head and its members.

Other references to that event.

Nor was it in this production only that these bold sentiments were uttered. In his writings from this period to his death, the lust of dominion, the avarice, and the cruelty, discovered by these rival pontiffs, in prosecuting their different claims, are all placed in fearless contrast with the maxims and spirit of Christ and his apostles. “Simon Magus,” he observes, “never laboured more in the work of “simony, than do these priests. And so God “would no longer suffer the fiend to reign in only “one such priest, but for the sin which they had “done, made division among two, so that men, in “Christ’s name, may the more easily overcome “them both.” Evil, it is remarked, is weakened by diffusion, no less than good; “and this now “moveth poor priests to speak heartily in this “matter, for when God will bless the church, but “men are slothful, and will not labour, their sloth “is to be rebuked for many reasons.”⁵ In his parochial discourses, delivered to his flock at Lutterworth, the schism of the papacy is frequently adverted to, and always in a manner tending to deliver men from the fear of the priest,

⁵ MS. Of the Church and her Governance. Bib. Reg. xviii. b. ix.

and, at the same time, to impress them with the fear of God.⁶

CHAP.
I.

It was at this period that the reformer completed a work, "On the Truth and Meaning of Scripture," the most extended, if not the most systematically arranged, of all his productions. A copy of this treatise was in the possession of our venerable martyrologist, and appears to have been considered the only one extant. That at present in the Bodleian library was formerly the property of Dr. Allen, a great admirer of Wycliffe, and a diligent collector of his manuscripts. It is without a title page, and a few leaves from the commencement are lost: the remaining portion of the volume, extending to more than six hundred pages, is in good preservation. Besides this copy, the only one hitherto mentioned in the printed catalogues of the reformer's writings, there is another in the library at Trinity College, Dublin. This is complete, and in an excellent state. The work itself has required this particular notice, not only from its extent, but from its character, as embodying almost every sentiment peculiar to the mind of our reformer. The supreme authority of holy writ; the unalienable right of private judgment; all the branches of clerical power; the sacraments of the church; together with almost every article of moral obli-

Notice of
his work
"On the
Truth and
Meaning of
Scripture."

⁶ Thus in one of his homilies (on Rom. xiii.) it is affirmed of the pontiff, "that he is not on Christ's side, who put his soul for his sheep, but on the side of antichrist, who putteth many souls for his pride. This man feedeth not the sheep of Christ, as Christ thrice commanded

"Peter; but spoileth them, and slayeth them, and leadeth them many wrong ways." The same contrast is pursued in the homily on John, Ep. i. c. ii. and much more at length in the treatise "On the Seven Deadly Sins."—MS. Bibl. Bodl.

CHAP. I. gation, may be found largely discussed in this volume. The author of the Acts and Monuments intended giving it to the world; and we may regret that his purpose was not accomplished. Were this the only work preserved from the pen of Wycliffe, it would alone be sufficient, to merit for its author the first place among the intrepid advocates of truth and piety in the annals of this country.⁷

His sickness
at Oxford;

But the labour of producing such compositions, and the excitements inseparable from the restless hostilities of his enemies, so shook his frame, at this period, as to threaten his speedy dissolution,—and, in truth, to lay the foundation of the malady which a few years later was the occasion of his death. Such also was the force of religious prejudice in the fourteenth century, that his old antagonists, the mendicants, conceived it next to impossible, that an heresiarch so notorious, should find himself near a future world without the most serious apprehensions of approaching vengeance. But while thus conscious of their own rectitude, and certain that the dogmas of the reformer had arisen from the suggestions of the great enemy, some advantages to their cause were anticipated, could the dying culprit be induced to utter any recantation of his published opinions. Wycliffe was in Oxford when this sickness arrested his activity, and confined him to his chamber. From the four orders of friars, four doctors, who were also called regents, were gravely deputed to wait

⁷ MS. Bibl. Bodl. Rotulæ in Archi. *Sensu et Veritate Scripturæ*, is the
A. 3021, 32. MS. Trinity College, title given to the work by Fox,
Dublin, class C. tab. 1. No. 24. De i. 583.

on their expiring enemy; and to these the same CHAP.
I.
number of civil officers, called senators of the city, and aldermen of the wards, were added. When this embassy entered the apartment of the rector of Lutterworth, he was seen stretched on his bed. Some kind wishes were first expressed as to his better health, and the blessing of a speedy recovery. It was presently suggested, that he must be aware of the many wrongs which the whole mendicant brotherhood had sustained from his attacks, especially in his sermons, and in certain of his writings; and as death was now, apparently, about to remove him, it was sincerely hoped, that he would not conceal his penitence, but distinctly revoke whatever he had said tending to the injury of those holy fraternities. The sick man remained silent, and motionless, until this address was concluded. He then beckoned his servants to raise him in his bed; and fixing his eyes on the persons assembled, summoned all his remaining strength, as he exclaimed aloud, “I shall not die but live, and shall again declare the evil deeds of the friars!” The doctors, and their attendants, retreated in mortification and dismay, and they lived to feel the truth of the reformer’s prediction; nor will it be easy to imagine another scene, more characteristic of the parties composing it, or of the times with which it is connected.⁸

While the writings of Wycliffe were thus performing their part on the mind of his countrymen, it was not merely his divinity lectures, but the whole of his pulpit instructions, which were studiously directed to the same object. It is known

His sentiments with respect to preaching.

⁸ Lewis, c. iv. 82. Bale, 469, &c.

CHAP. that in the fourteenth century, the exercises of
 I. public worship consisted of little beside that species of mechanical occupation which an apostle describes as “bodily exercise,” and as “profiting little.” These, however, and that domestic ministration of the sacraments, to which the most feeble or depraved among the clergy were deemed fully competent, were generally considered as securing to the worshipper whatever it was the design of christianity to bestow. As the consequence of questioning this theory, and at length of wholly denying the efficacy of such services, except as accompanied by appropriate perception and feeling on the part of the persons engaged in them, was the importance attached by our reformer to the office of preaching. No language can be more forcible, than that in which the sacred writers speak of the preaching of the cross, as the divinely appointed means of bringing the nations to the obedience of the gospel; and in proportion as men have imbibed the spirit of primitive piety, in any subsequent age, has been the prominence assigned to this department of ministerial duty. Among the means which had induced our Saxon ancestors to renounce their ancient idolatry, preaching held a conspicuous place;⁹ but from that period to the age of Wycliffe, it fell into comparative disuse in the practice of the English clergy. Grossteste deplored this fact, and with a view to supply the deficiency, became a zealous patron of the preaching friars. He lived,

⁹ This was the service to which Aidan, the apostle of Northumbria, devoted his life. (Bede, c. v.) In his first attempt to address the pagan

Saxons, Oswald, the sovereign, acted as his interpreter. By the Scottish missionaries, in general, the same importance was attached to this function.

however, to regret that remedy, as being even CHAP.
I.
———— worse than the disease.¹⁰ Yet so powerful were the effects of preaching, even in the hands of the mendicants, that had not their rapid success produced so speedy a corruption of their institute, the parochial clergy, by limiting their official services to the prescribed repetitions from the mass book, must have lost the whole of their influence over the mind of the people.¹¹ Wycliffe saw this state of things, but while he complained of the indolence and the vices of the secular clergy, as leading to the prevalent neglect of this exercise, his boldest censures were reserved for the fraternities, in whose labours he could discern nothing but the abuses of the function, which they had assumed as their peculiar province. The itinerant character of their ministry could hardly have displeased him, as he often defended the same practice in his followers. It was their substituting “fables—chronicles of the world—and stories from the battle of Troy”—in the place of the gospel; and the religious delusions imposed by them on the rich and the poor, to raise themselves into distinction, and to gratify their avarice and sensuality, which filled him with so restless an abhorrence of “these new orders.” Instead, however, of imbibing a disgust of preaching, from seeing it thus perverted, the reformer appears to have judged only the more favourably of its power as the means of reformation, if rightly applied. Possessed himself of such learning as had aided the mendicants in acquiring their reputation, he was also a proficient in that power of oral com-

¹⁰ Paris, 873.

¹¹ See Prelim. View, c. iii. sect. i.

CHAP. I. munication which was their special faculty. In Wycliffe, the severity of the cloister was associated with the learning of the college, and with that power of interesting the understanding and affections of ordinary minds, which is rarely found in such combinations. In secret, he mourned over the degraded state of his country, and over that immense expenditure of wealth in favour of the clergy, which served only to perpetuate their secular character, and to strengthen every cord of the national thralldom; and to contribute something toward the recovery of his native land from this state of gloomy bondage, was the object to which the acquirements, and the energies, of his generous nature were readily devoted.

His laborious attention to the office of preaching.

We know not the number of sermons composed by Wycliffe, but that copies of nearly three hundred should have escaped the effort which was so long made to effect the destruction of whatever his pen had produced, is sufficient to assure us, that his labours as a preacher were abundant.¹² His zeal was not of that spurious kind which assails the vast only, or which expatiates on the great and the future, at the cost of every nearer and more humble department of duty. Accordingly, to appreciate the character of the English reformer, it is necessary to view him, not only as advocating the claims of his sovereign before the delegates of the pontiff; as solving the questions which perplexed the English parliament; or as

¹² The copy which I have principally consulted, is that of the British Museum.—Bib. Reg. xviii. b. ix. Several copies, more or less perfect, and written, in some instances, before

the close of the fourteenth century, and in others later, are still extant in the Museum, and in the libraries of Oxford, Cambridge, and Dublin.

challenging the most intellectual of the age to CHAP. I.
 discussions on the truth of his acknowledged doc-
 trine. To all this he added the diligent perform-
 ance of those less imposing duties which devolve
 on the parish priest. It was no novelty to see the
 venerable Wycliffe in a village pulpit, surrounded
 by his rustic auditory ; or in the lowest hovel of
 the poor, fulfilling his office at the bedside of the
 sick and the dying, whether freeman or slave. It
 was over a sphere thus extended, that his genius
 and benevolence were diffused. Previous to this
 period, he had required his disciples to unite with
 the devotions of the sabbath, a regular attention to
 the wants of the afflicted and the poor. The pub-
 lic exercises of that day being devoutly performed,
 the christian man is enjoined “ to visit those who
 “ are sick, or who are in trouble, especially those
 “ whom God hath made needy by age, or by other
 “ sickness, as the feeble, the blind, and the lame,
 “ who are in poverty. These thou shalt relieve
 “ with thy goods, after thy power, and after their
 “ need, for thus biddeth the gospel.¹³” It is but
 just to suppose, that the preacher, who, under
 such circumstances, was forward to inculcate
 these and similar offices of domestic charity, was
 himself accustomed to conform to them. But his
 favourite doctrine, which defined true charity as
 “ beginning at the love of man’s spirit,” was so far
 extended, as to induce him to believe, that “ men
 “ who love not the souls, love little the bodies
 “ of their neighbours ;” and hence the work of
 christian instruction is described, as “ the best

¹³ MS. Exposition of the Decalogue, Cotton. Titus, D. xix. 122.

CHAP. "service that man may do for his brother."¹⁴

I.

Priests who are found "in taverns, and hunting, " and playing at their tables," instead of "learning God's law, and preaching," are accordingly denounced as "foulest traitors," since among the duties of their office, "most of all is the preaching " of the gospel; for this Christ enjoined on his " disciples more than any other; by this he conquered the world out of the fiend's hand; and " whosoever he be that can but bring priests to " act thus, hath authority from God, and merit in " his deed."¹⁵

Wycliffe's
reasonings
in favour of
preaching.

As the impression made by Wycliffe, and his followers, on the mind of their contemporaries, may be attributed, in a great degree, to their peculiar sentiments on the relative importance of preaching, it will not perhaps be uninteresting to the reader, to notice the statements and reasonings of the reformer, on this point, more at length. "I. The highest service that men may attain to " on earth," is said to be, to "preach the word " of God. This service falls peculiarly to priests, " and therefore God more straightly demands it " of them. Hereby should they produce children " to God, and that is the end for which God has " wedded the church. Lovely it might be, to have " a son that were lord of this world, but fairer " much it were to have a son in God, who, as a " member of holy church, shall ascend to heaven! " And for this cause, Jesus Christ left other works, " and occupied himself mostly in preaching; and " thus did his apostles, and for this God loved

¹⁴ Homily on Philippians, c. iii.

¹⁵ Epistola ad Simples Sacerdotes.

“ them. II. Also, he does best, who best keeps CHAP.
I.
“ the commandments of God. Now the first —
“ commandment of the second table bids us ho-
“ nour our elders, as our father and mother. But
“ this honour should be first given to holy church,
“ for she is the mother we should most love, and
“ for her, as our faith teaches, Christ died. The
“ church, however, is honoured most by the
“ preaching of God’s word, and hence this is the
“ best service that priests may render unto God.
“ Thus a woman said to Christ, that the womb
“ which bare him, and the breasts which he had
“ sucked, should be blessed of God; but Christ
“ said, rather should that man be blessed, who
“ should hear the words of God, and keep them.
“ And this should preachers do more than other
“ men, and this word should they keep more than
“ any other treasure. Idleness in this office is
“ to the church its greatest injury, producing
“ most the children of the fiend, and sending
“ them to his court. III. Also, that service is the
“ best, which has the worst opposed to it. But
“ the opposite of preaching, is of all things the
“ worst; and therefore preaching, if it be well
“ done, is the best of all. And accordingly,
“ Jesus Christ, when he ascended into heaven,
“ commanded it especially to all his apostles, to
“ preach the gospel freely to every man. So also,
“ when Christ spoke last with Peter, he bade him
“ thrice, as he loved him, to feed his sheep; and
“ this would not a wise shepherd have done, had
“ he not himself loved it well. In this stands the
“ office of the spiritual shepherd. As the bishop
“ of the temple hindered Christ, so is he hindered

CHAP. I. “ by the hindering of this deed. Therefore Christ
 ——— “ told them, that at the day of doom, Sodom and
 “ Gomorrah should better fare than they. And
 “ thus, if our bishops preach not in their own
 “ persons, and hinder true priests from preaching,
 “ they are in the sin of the bishops who killed
 “ the Lord Jesus Christ.”¹⁶

So far then was the reformer from confiding in the sacraments of the church, as certainly connected with a participation in the mercies of redemption. Man he considers, as a being endowed with reason and with passions, and he attempts the discipline of his affections, only by bringing the light of divine truth to bear upon his understanding. This, in the language of the church of Rome, was to ensnare the unwary, by an artful appeal to the vanity and self-confidence of the human mind. But if there be truth in religion, or nature, intellectual culture is the only medium through which the moral improvement of man should be contemplated. The faculties of his being, and the known will of the Deity, announce him as accountable; and the theory which serves at all to weaken the feeling of this accountableness, must be of murderous tendency.

There is another motive, however, from which objection to the office of preaching has sometimes arisen. To have imitated the zeal of Wycliffe, on this point, would have required a different faculty from what was necessary to go through the usual routine of parish duty. The class of men, who were satisfied with their ability for such performances, and still more the inmates of con-

¹⁶ MS. *Contra Fratres* Bibl. Bodl. Archi. A. 83, p. 19, 20.

vents, would affect to be astonished at the weakness, or the novelty, of the reformer's opinions, respecting a function, which the care of the church had rendered almost superfluous, which had ever been but too much allied to ostentation, and pregnant with no small danger to the peace and unity of the christian commonwealth. It is thus he reasons with such objectors: "When
" true men teach, that by the law of God, and
" wit, and reason, each priest is bound to do his
" utmost to preach the gospel of Christ, the fiend
" beguileth hypocrites to excuse him from this
" service by teaching a feigned contemplative
" life;—and urging, that since that is the best,
" and they may not do both, they are needed,
" from their love of God, to leave the preaching
" of the gospel to live in contemplation. But see
" now the hypocrisy and falsehood of this. Our
" faith teaches us, that since Christ was God,
" and might not err, he taught and did the best
" life for priests; yet Christ preached the gospel,
" and charged all his apostles and disciples to go
" and preach the gospel to all men. The best life
" then for priests, in this world, is to teach and
" preach the gospel. God also teacheth in the
" old law, that the office of a priest is to shew to
" the people their sins. But as each priest is a
" prophet by his order, according to St. Gregory
" on the Gospels, it is then the office of each to
" preach and to proclaim the sins of the people;
" and in this manner shall each priest be an angel
" of God, as holy writ affirms. Also Christ, and
" John the Baptist, left the desert, and preached
" the gospel to their death. To do this, therefore,

CHAP. I. — “ is the greatest charity, or else they were out of
“ charity, or at least imperfect in it; and that
“ may hardly be, since the one was God; and
“ since no man, after Christ, hath been holier
“ than the Baptist.”

“ Also, the holy prophet, Jeremiah, hallowed in
“ his mother’s womb, might not be excused from
“ preaching by his love of contemplation, but was
“ charged of God to proclaim the sins of the
“ people, and to suffer hard pain for doing so; and
“ so were all the prophets of God. Ah! Lord,
“ since Christ and John, and all the prophets,
“ were compelled by charity to come out of the
“ desert to preach to the people, and to leave
“ their solitary prayers, how dare these pretend-
“ ing heretics say it is better to be still, and to
“ pray over their own feigned ordinances, than to
“ preach the gospel of Christ? Lord! what
“ cursed spirit of falsehood moveth priests to close
“ themselves within stone walls for all their life,
“ since Christ commanded all his apostles and
“ priests to go into all the world, and to preach
“ the gospel? Certainly they are open fools, and
“ do plainly against the gospel; and if they
“ continue in this error, are accursed of God, as
“ perilous deceivers, and heretics. For in the
“ best part of the pope’s law, it is said, that each
“ man who cometh to the priesthood, taketh on
“ him the office of a beadle, or a crier, to go
“ before doomsday, and to cry to the people their
“ sins, and the vengeance of God; and since men
“ are holden heretics who do against the pope’s
“ law, are not those priests heretics, who refuse
“ to preach the gospel of Christ, and compel other

“ true men to leave the preaching of it? All laws CHAP.
 “ opposed to this service, are opposed to God’s I.
 “ law, and reason and charity, and for the main-
 “ tenance of pride and covetousness in Antichrist’s
 “ worldly clerks.”¹⁷

To those who allege from the gospel, that Magdalene chose the better part, in preferring a contemplative to an active life, it is replied, that the quotation might have some pertinence, if priests were women, and if no command opposed to a life of solitude and uselessness could be found in scripture. The result, indeed, of the reasonings commonly adopted on this subject, is said to be, “ that Christ, when in this world, chose
 “ the life least suited to it, and that he has obliged
 “ all his priests to forsake the better and take
 “ the worse. It is thus,” he adds, “ these de-
 “ ceivers put error on Jesus Christ. *** Prayer,”
 it is cautiously affirmed, “ is good, but not so
 “ good as preaching; and, accordingly, in preach-
 “ ing, and also in praying, in the giving of sacra-
 “ ments, the learning of the law of God, and the
 “ rendering of a good example by purity of life,
 “ in these should stand the life of a priest.”¹⁸

Such were the opinions of Wycliffe with respect to preaching, as compared with the other duties of the christian minister, and from his adherence to these arose much of his efficiency as a reformer. Opinions so true, so practical, and so plainly stated, could not have been reiterated in vain; and we find them creating the class of

¹⁷ MS. Of a Feigned Contemplative Life, &c. Trinity College, Dublin, class C. tab. 3. No. 12.

¹⁸ MS. Contra Fratres, Bibl. Bodl. Arch. A. 83.

CHAP. I. men, called by the rector of Lutterworth, “poor
 ——— “priests;”—persons, whose itinerant preaching,
 we shall presently see, was laboriously directed
 to discredit the superstitions, and to advance the
 piety of their countrymen.

Methods of
 preaching.

While such was the place assigned by the re-
 former to the office of preaching, it may be proper
 to remark, that to the commencement of the thir-
 teenth century, two methods of performing this
 service had prevailed. These were technically
 called, “declaring,” and “postillating.” According
 to the former, the preacher commenced, by an-
 nouncing the subject on which he meant to dis-
 course, and proceeded to deliver, what in modern
 language would be considered an oration, or an
 essay, rather than a sermon. To postillate, was
 to commence with reading a portion of scripture,
 and then taking its parts, in the order of the
 writer, to offer such remarks upon them, as were
 fitted to explain their meaning, and secure their
 application. To the latter method, which is the
 same with what is still called lecturing, or expo-
 sition, another was added about this period, and
 one by which the ancient practice of declaring was
 ere long nearly abolished, and the far better cus-
 tom of postillating was rendered much less fre-
 quent. The sacred text had been recently divided
 into its present order of chapters; and the logic
 to which the schoolmen were so devoted, sug-
 gested the selecting of some brief portion of
 scripture as the basis of a sermon, and also that
 the matters introduced to illustrate the doctrine or
 duty to be discussed, should be divided and sub-
 divided, in the manner still so generally adopted

by preachers.¹⁹ The sacred writings were too highly valued by Wycliffe, to be dispensed with as the obvious foundation of the instructions delivered by him from the pulpit. This motive, also, which led him to avoid the practice of declaring, appears to have rendered him doubtful concerning the utility of the new scholastic mode of teaching, and to have determined his general preference of the expository method.

CHAP.
I.

His compositions for the pulpit, therefore, which have descended to us, are nearly all of the class described as "postils." They are also the production of different periods, through the interval from 1376, when the writer became rector of Lutterworth, to the close of 1384. In some instances, they consist of little more than a few brief notes, appended to a vernacular translation of the lesson for the day, in others they approach nearer to the length of a modern sermon. But, when filling several closely-written folio pages, we know not how far to regard them as exhibiting any thing beyond the spirit or the general manner of the reformer's efforts as a preacher. That he wholly restricted

Character
of his
sermons.

¹⁹ Wood i. 58, 59. Knighton, col. 2430. The former writer has introduced friar Bacon, as bitterly lamenting the prevalence of the scholastic methods of preaching, and as accounting for its adoption in a way not very honourable to the contemporary clergy. "The greatest part of our prelates," he observes, "having but little knowledge in divinity, and having been little used to preaching in their youth, when they become bishops, and are sometimes obliged to preach, are under a necessity of begging and borrowing the sermons

"of certain novices, who have invented a new way of preaching, by endless divisions and quibblings, in which there is neither sublimity of style, nor depth of wisdom, but much childish trifling and folly, unsuitable to the dignity of the pulpit. May God," he exclaims, "banish this conceited and artificial way of preaching out of his church, for it will never do any good, nor elevate the hearts of the hearers to any thing that is good or excellent."—Henry's Hist. viii. 182—185.

CHAP. himself, in any case, to what he had written, is
I. ——— improbable, from his known facility of extemporaneous communication, and from the fact that these preparations for the pulpit, sometimes resemble the mere specifications of topics, rather than any regular discussion of them. Nor is it certain, indeed, that their publication was the act of the reformer, or at all anticipated by him. They contain nothing opposed to the supposition of their having been collected and published after his decease; and the character of Purvey, his curate at that period, renders it certain that a careful effort would be made to preserve every such document. But through whatever medium the copies of these discourses have been transmitted, we may safely conclude that what they contain was delivered to the people of Lutterworth by their rector; and there is scarcely a peculiarity of opinion adopted by Wycliffe, the nature, or the progress of which, might not be illustrated from these voluminous remains. It should also be stated, that these compositions are strictly of a popular character. References to abstruse or speculative questions frequently arise, either from the import of the text, or from the reasonings suggested by it; but these are almost invariably dismissed, that “things more “profiting” might become the matter of attention. Through the whole, the multiplied corruptions of the hierarchy are vigorously assailed, as forming the great barrier to all religious improvement. The social obligations of men are also frequently discussed, and traced with a cautious firmness to the authority of the scriptures; while the doctrines of the gospel are uniformly exhibited, as declaring

the guilt, and the spiritual infirmities of men, to be such as to render the atonement of Christ their only way of pardon, and the grace of the divine Spirit their only hope of purity. A few extracts will farther assist the reader in judging of the manner in which the reformer discharged the duties of the humble but important office of village preacher.

It is thus he addressed his parishioners, on the obligation of priests, to extend their services as preachers to the village and the hamlet, and to the most scattered portions of the community.

His mode of treating the questions of reform from the pulpit.

“ The gospel telleth us the duty which falls to all
 “ the disciples of Christ, and also telleth us how
 “ priests, both high and low, should occupy them-
 “ selves in the church of God, and in serving him.
 “ And first, Jesus himself did indeed the lessons
 “ which he taught. The gospel relates how Jesus
 “ went about in the places of the country, both
 “ great and small, as in cities and castles, or
 “ small towns, and this to teach us to profit gene-
 “ rally unto men, and not to forbear to preach
 “ to a people because they are few, and our name
 “ may not, in consequence, be great. For we
 “ should labour for God, and from him hope for
 “ our reward. There is no doubt, that Christ
 “ went into small uplandish towns, as to Beth-
 “ phage, and Cana in Galilee; for Christ went to
 “ all those places where he wished to do good.
 “ And he laboured not thus for gain, for he was
 “ not smitten with pride or with covetousness.”²⁰

In a subsequent discourse, he remarks, that “ it
 “ was ever the manner of Jesus to speak the

²⁰ Homilies, Bib. Reg. xviii. b. ix. 134.

CHAP. I. “ words of God, wherever he knew that they
 “ would be profitable to others who heard them ;
 “ and hence Christ often preached, now at meat,
 “ and now at supper, and indeed at whatever time
 “ it was convenient for others to hear him.”²¹ It
 is accordingly regretted, that the “ craft of the
 “ fiend ” had given that form to the jurisdiction of
 the prelates, which greatly prevented good men
 in their attempts to imitate those retired efforts in
 the cause of humanity and religion, which appear
 so lovely in the history of the Saviour. While
 Hebrew priests admitted the Master to their syna-
 gogues, the successors of the apostles are said to
 exclude his servants from their churches.²²

In an exposition of the epistle read on the
 third Sunday after advent, he thus proceeds ;—
 “ Let a man so guess of us, as of the ministers of
 “ God, and as dispensers of his services. And if
 “ each man should be found true in this matter,
 “ priests, both high and low, should be found
 “ more true. But most foul is the failure and
 “ the sin of priests in this respect. As if ashamed
 “ to appear as the servants of Christ, the pope
 “ and his bishops show the life of emperors, and
 “ of the lordly in the world, and not the living of
 “ Christ. But since Christ hated such things,
 “ they give us no room to guess them to be the
 “ ministers of Christ. And so they fail in the
 “ first lesson which Paul teacheth in this scrip-
 “ ture. Lord ! what good doth the idle talk of the
 “ pope, who must be called of men most blessed
 “ father, and bishops most reverend men, while
 “ their life is discordant from that of Christ ? In

²¹ Hom. Bib. Reg. p. 169.²² Ibid. 134.

“ so taking of these names, they show that they CHAP.
I.
 “ are on the fiend’s side, and children of the father ———
 “ of falsehood. After St. Gregory, the pope may
 “ say, that he is the servant of the servants of
 “ God, but his life reverseth his name; for he
 “ faileth to follow Christ, and is not the dispenser
 “ of the services which God hath bidden, but de-
 “ parteth from this service to that lordship which
 “ emperors have bestowed. And thus, all the
 “ services of the church, which Christ hath ap-
 “ pointed to his priests, are turned aside, so that
 “ if men will take heed to that service which
 “ Christ hath thus limited, it is all turned upside
 “ down, and hypocrites are become rulers.”²³

But it would have been of small service to have shown that the ruling clergy were little worthy of the regard which their titles claimed for them, unless some protection could be afforded from the usual consequences of clerical displeasure. To this point the remaining portion of the sermon distinctly relates. The apostle is noticed as affirming, “ that in his case it was a small thing
 “ to be judged of man’s judgment;” and from this it is observed, “ that men should not suppose
 “ themselves injured by the blind judgment of
 “ men, since God will judge all things, whether
 “ to good or evil. Paul therefore taketh little
 “ heed to the judgment that man judgeth, for
 “ he knew well, from the scriptures, that if God
 “ judgeth thus, then man’s judgment must stand,
 “ and not else. Thus there are two days of
 “ judgment, the day of the Lord, and man’s
 “ day. The day of the Lord is the day of doom,

²³ Ibid.

CHAP. ^{I.} “ when he shall judge all manner of men ; the
“ day of man is now present, when man judgeth,
“ and by the law of man. Now every present
“ judgment must be reversed, if it ought reverseth
“ reason. But at the day of doom, all shall stand
“ according to the judgment of God. That is the
“ day of the Lord, because then all shall be as he
“ will, and nothing shall reverse his judgment ;
“ and St. Paul therefore saith, ‘ Judge nothing
“ before the time, until the time of the Lord come,
“ the which shall light the hidden things of dark-
“ ness, and shall make known the counsels of the
“ heart.’—And this moveth many men to think
“ day and night upon the law of God, for that
“ leadeth to a knowledge of what is God’s will,
“ and without a knowledge of this should man do
“ nothing, and this also moveth men to forsake
“ the judgment of man. To St. Paul, the truth
“ of holy writ, which is the will of the first Judge,
“ was enough until doomsday. Stewards of the
“ church, therefore, should not judge merely ac-
“ cording to their own will, but always accord-
“ ing to the law of God, and in things of which
“ they are certain. But the laws and judgments
“ which Antichrist has brought in, and added
“ to the law of God, mar too much the church of
“ Christ. For with the stewards of the church,
“ the laws of Antichrist are the rules by which
“ they make officers therein ; and to deceive the
“ laity, Antichrist challengeth to be, in such things,
“ fully God’s fellow ; for he affirms that, if he
“ judgeth thus, his will should be taken for reason,
“ whereas this is the highest point that falleth
“ to the godhead. Popes, and kings, therefore,

“ should seek a reason above their own will, for CHAP.
 “ such blasphemy often bringeth to men more I.
 “ than the pride of Lucifer. He said he would
 “ ascend, and be like the Most High, but he chal-
 “ lenged not to be the fellow of God, even with
 “ him, or passing him! May God bring down
 “ this pride, and help, that his word may reverse
 “ that of the fiend! Well indeed, I know, that
 “ when it is at the highest, this smoke shall dis-
 “ appear.”²⁴ The advice of the preacher in con-
 clusion is, that his hearers should study the
 will of God, and thus learn to cherish an inde-
 pendence of the judgments pronounced upon
 them by “ popes or prelates,” inasmuch as such
 decisions “ stretch not to doomsday”—the pe-
 riod, when the will of God shall be felt as su-
 preme, and unalterable.

One more extract must be sufficient, to illus-
 trate the manner in which the reformer was accus-
 tomed to notice the disorders of the hierarchy
 from the pulpit. “ Freedom,” it is remarked, “ is
 “ much coveted, as men know by nature, but
 “ much more should christian men covet the
 “ better freedom of Christ. It is known, however,
 “ that Antichrist hath enthralled the church more
 “ than it was under the old law, though then
 “ the service was not to be borne. New laws are
 “ now made by Antichrist, and such as are not
 “ founded on the laws of the Saviour. More
 “ ceremonies too are now brought in than were
 “ in the old law, and more do they tarry men
 “ in coming to heaven, than did the traditions of
 “ the Scribes and Pharisees. One cord of this

²⁴ Hom. Bib. Reg.

CHAP. I. “ thraldom, is the lordship claimed by Antichrist,
 — “ as being full lord both of spirituals and tem-
 “ porals. Thus he turneth christian men aside
 “ from serving Christ in christian freedom; so
 “ much so, that they might well say as the poet
 “ saith in his fable the frogs said to the har-
 “ row—‘ Cursed be so many masters.’ For in
 “ this day, christian men are oppressed, now with
 “ popes, and now with bishops, now with cardi-
 “ nals under popes, and now with prelates under
 “ bishops, and now their head is assailed with
 “ censures,—in short, buffeted are they as men
 “ would serve a football. But certainly, if the
 “ Baptist were not worthy to loose the latchet of
 “ the shoe of Christ, Antichrist hath no power
 “ thus to impede the freedom which Christ hath
 “ bought. Christ gave this freedom to men, that
 “ they might come to the bliss of Heaven with
 “ less difficulty; but Antichrist burdens them, that
 “ they may give him money. Foul, therefore, is
 “ this doing, with respect both to God and his
 “ law. Ever also do these hypocrites dread lest
 “ God’s law should be shown, and they should
 “ thus be convicted of their falsehood. For God
 “ and his law are most powerful; and for a time,
 “ only, may these deceivers hold men in the
 “ thraldom of Satan.”²⁵

Extracts
 illustrating
 the theolo-
 gical doc-
 trine and the
 devotional
 feeling of his
 parochial
 addresses.

But while these and similar evils were fre-
 quently noticed in the sermons of the reformer,
 and always in this intrepid temper, the flock com-
 mitted to his care, as rector of Lutterworth, was far
 from being unaccustomed to the sound of themes
 more devotional in their character, and less con-

²⁵ Hom. Bib. Reg.

ned with the passions too commonly excited by controversy. The following is the substance of a sermon delivered by him on a christmas day, and upon the passage in Isaiah, beginning with the words, “Unto us a child is born.” “On this
“ day we may affirm that a Child is born to us,
“ since Jesus, according to our belief, was this
“ day born. Both in figure, and in letter, God
“ spake of old to this intent, that to us a Child
“ should be born, in whom we should have joy.
“ From this speech of Isaiah, three short lessons
“ are to be delivered, that men may rejoice in the
“ after-services of this Child. First, we hold it
“ as a part of our faith, that as our first parents
“ had sinned, there must be atonement made for
“ it, according to the righteousness of God. For
“ as God is merciful, so he is full of righteousness.
“ But except he keep his righteousness in this
“ point, how may he judge all the world? There
“ is no sin done but what is against God, but this
“ sin was done directly against the Lord Al-
“ mighty, and Allrightful. The greater also the
“ Lord is, against whom any sin is done, the
“ greater always is the sin,—just as to do against
“ the king’s bidding is deemed the greatest of
“ offences. But the sin which is done against
“ God’s bidding is greater without measure. God
“ then, according to our belief, bid Adam that he
“ should not eat of the apple. Yet he broke
“ God’s command; nor was he to be excused
“ therein by his own weakness, by Eve, nor by
“ the serpent; and hence, according to the righ-
“ teousness of God, this sin must always be pu-
“ nished. It is to speak lightly, to say that God

CHAP. I. " might of his mere power forgive this sin, without
" the atonement which was made for it, since the
" justice of God would not suffer this, but re-
" quires that every trespass be punished either in
" earth or in hell. God may not accept a person,
" to forgive him his sin without an atonement,
" else he must give free licence to sin, both in
" angels and men, and then sin were no sin, and
" our God were no God!

" Such is the first lesson we take as a part of our
" faith; the second is, that the person who may
" make atonement for the sin of our first father,
" must needs be God and man. For as man's nature
" trespassed, so must man's nature render atone-
" ment. An angel therefore would attempt in vain
" to make atonement for man, for he has not the
" power to do it, nor was his the nature that here
" sinned. But since all men form one person, if
" any member of this person maketh atonement,
" the whole person maketh it. But we may see
" that if God made a man of nought, or strictly
" anew, after the manner of Adam, yet he were
" bound to God, to the extent of his power for
" himself, having nothing wherewith to make
" atonement for his own, or for Adam's sin.
" Since then, atonement must be made for the
" sin of Adam, as we have shown, the person
" to make the atonement must be God and man,
" for then the worthiness of this person's deeds
" were even with the unworthiness of the sin."

From this necessity of an atonement for sin,
and of the incarnation that it might be made, the
conclusion is said to follow, that the Child born
must needs be God and man. The doctrine of

the discourse is then made to assume a practical bearing. “And we suppose,” observes the preacher, “that this Child is only born *to* the men who follow him in his manner of life, for he was born *against* others. The men who are unjust and proud, and who rebel against God, may read their judgment in the person of Christ. By him, they must needs be condemned, and most certainly if they continue wicked toward his Spirit to their death. And if we covet sincerely that this Child may prove to be born to us; have we joy of him, and follow we him in these three virtues, in righteousness, and meekness, and in patience for our God. For whoever shall be against Christ and his Spirit in these unto his death, must needs be condemned of this Child, as others must needs be saved. And thus the joy professed in this Child, who was all meekness, and full of virtues, should make men to be children in malice, and then they would well keep this festival. To those who would indulge in strife, I would say that the Child who is born is also Prince of peace, and loveth peace, and contemneth men contrary to peace. Reflect we then how Christ came in the fulness of time, when he should; and how he came in meekness, teaching us this at his birth; and how he came in patience, continuing even from his birth unto his death; and follow we him in these things, for the joy that we here have in him, and because this joy in the patience of Christ bringeth to joy that ever shall last.”²⁶

²⁶ Hom. Bib. Reg.

CHAP.
I.
——

The doctrines of scripture with regard to the person of Christ, and his sufferings considered as the price of our redemption, are of frequent occurrence in these discourses. It was in the following manner that the reformer generally spoke on the latter subject. “Men mark the passion of Christ, “and print it on their heart, somewhat to follow “it. It was the most *voluntary* passion that ever “was suffered, and the most *painful*. It was “most *voluntary*, and so most meritorious. Hence, “when Christ went to Jerusalem, he foretold “the form of his passion to his disciples, and he “who before concealed himself to come to the “city, came now to his suffering in a way to “shew his free will. Hence also he saith at the “supper, ‘With desire have I coveted to eat of “this passover with you.’ The desire of his god- “head, and the desire of his manhood, moved him “to eat thereof, and afterwards to suffer. But “all this was significant, and in figure of his last “supper which he eateth in heaven with the men “whom he hath chosen. And since Christ suf- “fered thus cheerfully for the sins of his brethren, “they should suffer gratefully for their own sins, “and should purpose to forsake them. This, in- “deed, is the cause why God would have the “passion of Christ rehearsed—the profit of the “brethren of Christ, and not his own. But the “*pain* of Christ’s passion, passed all other pain, “for he was the most tender of men, and in “middle age; and God, by miracle, allowed his “mind to suffer, for else, by his joy, he might “not have known sorrow. In Christ’s passion, “indeed, were all things, which could make

“ his pain great, and so make it the more meri- CHAP.
 “ torious. The place was solemn, and the day I. —
 “ also, and the hour, the most so known to Jews,
 “ or heathen men ; and the ingratitude, and con-
 “ tempt were most ; for men who should most
 “ have loved Christ, ordained the foulest death,
 “ in return for his deepest kindness ! We should
 “ also believe, that Christ suffered not, in any
 “ manner, but for some certain reason ; for he
 “ is both God and man, who made all things in
 “ their number, and so would frame his passion
 “ to answer to the greatness of man’s sin. Fol-
 “ low we then after Christ in his blessed passion,
 “ and keep we ourselves from sin hereafter, and
 “ gather we a devout mind from him.”²⁷ The
 reader will remember, that these devotional in-
 structions were prepared for the usual auditory of
 a parish church in the fourteenth century.

The following passages were intended by the preacher, to explain the only sense in which he Doctrine of
grace.
 could admit that men might be said to “ deserve”
 the felicities of heaven. “ We should know that
 “ faith is a gift of God, and that it may not be
 “ given to men except it be graciously. Thus,
 “ indeed, all the good which men have is of God,
 “ and accordingly when God rewardeth a good
 “ work of man, he crowneth his own gift. This
 “ then is also of grace, even as all things are of
 “ grace that men have according to the will of
 “ God. God’s goodness is the first cause why
 “ he confers any good on man ; and so it may not
 “ be that God doeth good to men, but if he do it
 “ freely, by his own grace ; and with this under-

²⁷ Hom. Bib. Reg. p. 61.

CHAP. “ stood, we shall grant that men deserve of God.”

I. — But the doctrine of short-sighted men “ as was
 “ Pelagius, and others, who conceive that nothing
 “ may be, unless it be of itself, as are mere sub-
 “ stances, is to be scorned, and left to idiots.” It
 is then remarked, in connexion with the story of
 the centurion, whose faith had elicited the above
 observation, “ Learn we of this knight, to be
 “ meek in heart, and in word, and in deed ; for
 “ he granted first, that he was under man’s power,
 “ and yet by power of man he might do many
 “ things ; much more should we know that we
 “ are under God’s power, and that we may do
 “ nothing but by the power of God ; and woe shall
 “ hereafter be to us, if we abuse this power.
 “ This root of meekness, therefore, should pro-
 “ duce in us all other virtues.” It is evident
 that, in the mind of the reformer, the doctrine of
 these passages, dangerous as its tendencies are
 sometimes said to be, was connected with a
 feeling of the most sincere devotion.

On the con-
 solations of
 religion.

It is thus he endeavours to strengthen the mind
 of the christian worshipper, while suffering under
 the adversities of life, and especially from the
 contempt of men. “ As men who are in a fever
 “ desire not that which were best for them, so
 “ men in sin covet not that which is best for
 “ them in this world. The world said that the
 “ apostles were fools, and forsaken of God ; and
 “ so it would say to-day of all who live like
 “ them ; for worldly joy, and earthly possessions
 “ alone pleaseth them, while of heavenly things,
 “ and of a right following after Christ, they savour
 “ not. And this their choice, in the present

“ world, is a manifest proof against them, that, in CHAP.
 “ soul, they are not holy, but turned aside to the I.
 “ things of the world. For as the palate of a
 “ sick man, distempered from good meat, moveth
 “ him to covet things contrary to his health, so it
 “ is with the soul of man when it savoureth not
 “ of the law of God. And as the want of na-
 “ tural appetite is a deadly sign to man, so a
 “ wanting of spiritual relish for God’s word is a
 “ sign of his second death.” Yet men are said to
 judge of their participation in the favour of God,
 by the success of their worldly enterprises. But
 to expose this error, it is observed, “ we should
 “ leave these sensible signs, and take the example
 “ of holy men, as of Christ, and his apostles; how
 “ they had not their bliss on earth, but that here
 “ Christ ordained them pain, and the hatred of
 “ the world, even much suffering to the men
 “ whom he most loved,—and this, to teach us
 “ how to follow him.” It is therefore said to
 follow, that in this world the marks of patient
 suffering should much rather be taken as those
 which bespeak the love of God.²⁸

The connexion between this independence of
 terrestrial evils, and the faith of the gospel, is
 thus pointed out. “ If thou hast a full belief of
 “ Christ, how he lived here on the earth, and
 “ how he overcame the world, thou also over-
 “ comest it, as a kind son. For if thou takest
 “ heed how Christ despised the world, and fol-
 “ lowest him here, as thou shouldst by the faith
 “ of the Father, thou must needs overcome it.
 “ And here it is manifest what many men are in

Connection
between
faith and
devotion.

²⁸ Hom. Bib. Reg. p. 78.

CHAP. "this world. They are not born of God, nor do
 I. "they believe in Christ. For if this belief were
 "in them, they should follow Christ in the man-
 "ner of his life, but they are not of faith, as will
 "be known in the day of doom. What man
 "should fully believe that the day of doom will
 "be anon, and that God shall then judge men,
 "after what they have been in his cause, and not
 "prepare himself to follow Christ for this bless-
 "ing thereof? Either the belief of such men
 "sleepeth, or they want a right belief; since
 "men who love this world, and rest in the lusts
 "thereof, live as if God had never spoken as in
 "his word, or would fail to judge them for their
 "doing. To all christian men, therefore, the
 "faith of Christ's life is needful, and hence we
 "should know the gospel, for this telleth the be-
 "lief of Christ."²⁹

²⁹ Hom. Bib. Reg p. 70. It may be due to myself to state, that previous to the publication of the present work, no information, at all satisfactory, as to the general character of these homilies

had been presented to the public, nor have they been at all quoted, so as to assist the reader in forming any judgment respecting them. Note to the second edition.

CHAPTER II.

HISTORY OF ATTEMPTS TOWARD A TRANSLATION OF THE SCRIPTURES INTO THE LANGUAGE OF THIS COUNTRY BEFORE THE AGE OF WYCLIFFE — BY THE ANGLO-SAXON CLERGY — BY THE ANGLO-NORMAN. — WYCLIFFE'S PURPOSE, AS EMBRACING A TRANSLATION OF THE WHOLE VOLUME, AND ITS GENERAL CIRCULATION, STRICTLY A NOVELTY. — THIS AFFIRMED BY KNIGHTON. — SOME CIRCUMSTANCES FAVOURABLE TO THIS ENTERPRISE. — EXTRACTS EXHIBITING THE REFORMER'S MANNER OF DEFENDING THIS EFFORT. — THE INSURRECTION OF THE COMMONS.

THAT the gospel was known to the people of this island, before the close of the first century, CHAP.
II.
— is the general testimony of historians.¹ Three centuries, also, intervened, before that connexion between the subject provinces of Britain and the capital of the empire, which had led to this diffusion of christianity, was dissolved. We have no authority, however, for supposing, that any portion of the sacred writings was possessed by our Celtic ancestors, during that period, in the vernacular tongue. With the few, indeed, who could read, the Latin, though introduced by their conquerors, was the principal object of attention;² and the importance of obtaining the scriptures in their own dialect, which this circumstance served greatly to diminish, was probably overlooked. Subsequently, the religion of the Britons must

¹ Usher, Stillingfleet, Collier.

² Tacitus, Vita Agric. c. xxi. Gildas, Hist. The last writer observes, that

from the prevalence of the Latin language, Britain might have been called a Roman rather than a British island.

CHAP. II. have suffered much from their protracted war with the Saxons ; and after the arrival of Augustine, nearly a century was occupied in bringing the disciples of Odin to their partial acknowledgment of the God of the Christians.

Attempts toward a translation of the scriptures by the Anglo-Saxons. 600.

700.

It was in the seventh century that Cedman, an Anglo-Saxon monk, produced a composition, which claimed the attention of his countrymen, as exhibiting the first application of their language to sacred poetry ; and as the first attempt to render any part of the inspired volume in the speech of our forefathers.³ This poem, which has all the marks of the antiquity assigned to it, includes the leading events of Old Testament history, as the creation of the world, the fall of angels and of man, the deluge, the departure from Egypt, the entrance upon Canaan, with some subsequent occurrences. In the following century, Aldhelm, bishop of Sherborne ; and Guthlac, the celebrated anchoret, are among the authors of the Anglo-Saxon versions of the Psalter. In the same age, the venerable Bede prefers his claim to the honour of a literal trans-

³ Bede, iv. 24.—On this interesting subject, Mr. Lewis's volume, intitled "A History of the English Translations of the Bible," is well known ; also a lesser work by Johnson. The latter production, however, though frequently cited as an authority, and honoured with a place among bishop Watson's Theological Tracts, is strangely inaccurate. I have found no better guide than Mr. Baber, a gentleman to whose discernment the public are indebted for a reprint of Wycliffe's New Testament. To that work a chapter is prefixed, intitled, "An Historical Account of the Saxon and English Versions

"of the Scriptures, previous to the opening of the Fifteenth Century," and it determines every question on this subject to the time of Wycliffe. The brief memoirs of our reformer, published in connexion with the same work, I should have noticed in the Preface, had I not been sensible that the writer is too well acquainted with these things, not to be fully aware, that his notices respecting the sacred scriptures, and his enlarged and revised catalogue of the Wycliffe manuscripts, impart to that portion of his publication its chief value.

lation of St. John's gospel.⁴ A manuscript copy of the Latin gospels, with a Saxon version interlined, known by the name of the Durham book, is attributed on probable evidence to about the time of Alfred.⁵ The Rushworth Gloss, is a Latin transcript of the same portion of the sacred volume, with a Saxon translation, introduced after the same manner, the latter being apparently the production of the tenth century.⁶ Among the valuable manuscripts of Benet College, Cambridge, is a third copy of the gospels in the Saxon tongue, written a little before the conquest; and a fourth, which belongs to the same period, and appears to have been copied from the former, may be seen in the Bodleian library.⁷ But an ecclesiastic, who did more than all his brethren toward supplying his countrymen with the scriptures in their own language, was Elfric. This industrious scholar lived during the reign of Ethelred, and subscribes himself, at different periods, as monk, mass priest, and abbot. In his epitome of the Old and New Testament, composed for Sigwerd, a nobleman, we are informed, that at the request of various persons, he had translated the Pentateuch, the books of Joshua and Judges, those of Esther, Job, and Judith, also the two books of Maccabees, with part of the first and second book of Kings.⁸ Alfred,

⁴ Baber. Cuthberti Vita Ven. Bedæ.

⁵ It is preserved in the British Museum, Nero, D. iv. and is described by Mr. Baber, as the finest specimen of Saxon calligraphy and decoration extant.

⁶ This is in the Bodleian, D. xxiv. No. 3964. It derived its name from

its former possessor, John Rushworth, Esq. of Lincoln's - inn. Baber, ubi supra.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Turner's Hist. iii. 442. Baber. The extent of Elfric's labours is learnt, as stated above, from various incidental notices occurring in such of

CHAP. II. whose name is associated by the admiration of our ancestors, with almost every thing enlightened in their polity or religion, is noticed as having prefixed a translation of certain passages from the Mosaic writings to his code of laws; and he is said to have made a considerable progress in a Saxon version of the Psalms a little previous to his death.⁹

By the
Anglo-
Norman.

This, however, is the extent of our information, on this interesting question, as connected with the Anglo-Saxon period of our history. The Anglo-Norman clergy were far more competent to have supplied their flock with this efficient means of sacred knowledge; but, in this respect, the example of their predecessors was slighted, or rather disapproved. Some fragments of scriptural truth may have been preserved by means of certain lessons which occurred in the ritual of the period; but the first attempt, after the conquest, to place any more complete portion of the scriptures before the English people, appears to have been made by the author of a rhyming paraphrase on the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, intitled “Ormulum.”¹⁰ Subsequent to the date of this work, which evidently belongs to one of the

his works as have descended to us. In his Epitome of the Old and New Testament, he has not only made his selection from the scriptures, but has frequently added things to the sacred story from other writings. A copy of this work, printed with an English translation by William L’Isle in 1623, is in the Bodleian, and another has been for some time in my possession. It is thus it begins; “Abbot Elfrike, greeteth friendly Sigwerd, at East Heolon. True it is I tell thee, that

“very wise is he who speaketh by his doings; and well proceedeth he both with God and with the world, who furnisheth himself with good works. And very plain it is in holy scripture, that holy men employed in well doing, were in this world held in good reputation.”

⁹ Spelman, i. 354. Prefatio Regis Aluredi, M. ad Leges suas. See also Baber, 62.

¹⁰ Ibid. Bodleian. Junius, i.

earliest stages of our language, we perceive a similar application of mind in a collection of metrical pieces, called *Salus Animæ*, or in English, "Sowlehele."¹¹ In the huge volume thus designated, the materials are not all of the same class. The object of the compiler, or transcriber, seems to have been to furnish a complete body of legendary and scriptural history in verse, or rather to collect into one view, all the religious history he could find. It professes, however, to exhibit an outline, both of the Old and New Testament, and its composition is supposed to have preceded the opening of the fourteenth century. In Benet College, Cambridge, there is another work of the same description, the offspring of the same period, and containing notices of the principal events recorded in the books of Genesis and Exodus. In that collection, there is also a copy of the Psalms in English metre, which is attributed to about the year 1300; and two transcripts, of nearly the same antiquity, have been preserved—the one in the Bodleian library, the other in that of Sir Robert Cotton.¹² But it is not until the middle of the following century, that we trace the remotest attempt to produce a literal translation even of detached portions of the scriptures. The effort then made was by Richard Roll, called the Hermit of Hampole. His labours, also, were restricted to a little more than half the book of Psalms, and to these a devotional commentary was annexed. Contemporary with this recluse, were some devout men among the clergy, who

¹¹ Warton's *History of English Poetry*, sect. i. MSS. Bodleian, 779, Baber.

¹² *Ibid.* 65.

CHAP. II. produced translations of such passages from the scriptures as were prominent in the offices of the church; while others ventured to complete separate versions of the gospels, or the epistles. The persons thus laudably employed were certainly few in number; but parts of St. Mark, and of St. Luke, and of several among the epistles, are included in the results of their labour which have descended to us. It should be added, that these versions, which are of various merit, were generally guarded by a comment.¹³

Novelty of Wycliffe's design in translating the scriptures.

From these details, as the sum of our information on the point to which they refer, it is evident, first, that a literal translation, of the entire scriptures—the laborious enterprise completed by Wycliffe about this period—was strictly a novel event in our religious history; and, secondly, that the publication of such a work, to be the property, not of distinguished individuals, but of the people in general, was a measure far beyond any thing contemplated by his precursors in the labours of translation. The only ground of suspicion, in the least degree plausible, as to the claims of Wycliffe to the originalty asserted, is contained in a production described as “a Prologue to the Bible,” and in a manuscript of the Bodleian. The writer of the Prologue speaks of being employed in translating the whole Bible, and refers also to an existing version. But that this document has been erroneously attributed to Wycliffe, is unquestionable, as it adverts to more than one event subsequent to the decease of our

¹³ Baber, 66, 67. Lewis.

reformer.¹⁴ In the Oxford manuscript, also, every thing depends on the date attached to it; but here an erasure has evidently been effected; and it is hardly to be doubted, that to supply the vacancy thus produced, would be to make the work a production of the year 1408.¹⁵ The author of the Prologue, noticed above, refers to an “Englyshe Bible of late translated,” by which he evidently intends that produced by the rector of Lutterworth. In the esteem of the reformer’s opponents, to have produced our first translation of the sacred writings must have been a very doubtful honour. It is nevertheless one, of which they have been not a little concerned to deprive him.

Had their zeal in this particular been much better sustained by authority, the testimony of Knighton must have been sufficient for ever to determine the question with the unprejudiced enquirer. That historian must be allowed to have known the customs of his contemporaries, and especially the place assigned by his own order to the inspired records, quite as well as any modern writer. Adverting to the zeal of Wycliffe in rendering the scriptures the property of the people, he thus writes: “Christ delivered his gospel to the clergy and doctors of the church, that they might administer to the laity and to weaker persons, according to the state of the

Testimony
of Knighton
respecting
the reform-
er’s transla-
tion of the
scriptures.

¹⁴ It is a curious production, and has been twice printed. The references to John Gerson, to a novel regulation in the University of Oxford, and to the proceedings of the parliament in 1395, determine its date as subsequent to the time of Wycliffe.

¹⁵ Baber. Historical Account and Memoirs of Wiclif. The present state of the numerals referred to is as follows, MCCC VIII. To supply the vacancy would be, we may reasonably suppose, to form the date assumed in the text.

CHAP. II. “ times and the wants of men. But this master
 “ John Wycliffe translated it out of Latin into En-
 “ glish, and thus laid it more open to the laity, and
 “ to women, who could read, than it had formerly
 “ been to the most learned of the clergy, even to
 “ those of them who had the best understanding.
 “ And in this way the gospel pearl is cast abroad,
 “ and trodden under foot of swine, and that which
 “ was before precious to both clergy and laity, is
 “ rendered, as it were, the common jest of both.
 “ The jewel of the church is turned into the sport
 “ of the people, and what was hitherto the principal
 “ gift of the clergy and divines, is made for ever
 “ common to the laity.”¹⁶ It was thus the canon
 of Leicester bewailed the translation of the Bible
 into the language of his country. To him, it not
 only appeared as a novelty in the history of offences,
 but as an innovation on ecclesiastical discipline,
 amounting to nothing short of sacrilege, and as
 tending to destroy even the appearances of religion.
 Nor can we forbear to regard his sentiments, in
 this respect, as those of his order in the fourteenth

¹⁶ De Eventibus Col. 2644. To the same effect is the decision of an English Council in 1408, with the archbishop Arundel at its head. “ The translation of the text of holy scriptures out of one tongue into another is a dangerous thing, as St. Jerome testifies, because it is not easy to make the verse in all respects the same. Therefore we enact, and ordain, that no one henceforth do, by his own authority, translate any text of holy scripture into the English tongue, or any other, by way of book or treatise; nor let any such book or treatise now lately composed in the time of John Wycliffe

“ aforesaid, or since, or hereafter to be composed, be read in whole or in part, in public or in private, under the pain of the greater excommunication.” Wilkins. Concilia, iii. 317. The spirit of this enactment was evidently that of the majority of the clergy in the age of Wycliffe. He describes them as affirming it to be heresy to speak of the holy scriptures in English.” But this is said to be a condemnation of “ the Holy Ghost, who first gave the scriptures in tongues to the apostles of Christ, as it is written, to speak the word in all languages that were ordained of God under heaven.” Wicket.

century. The historian no doubt knew that frag-
ments, and even considerable portions of holy writ, —————
had been clothed in this unconsecrated dialect;
but he also knew, that, hitherto, they were merely
parts of that secreted volume which had been so
rendered, and that these curious documents sel-
dom passed into the hands of the laity, and that
they were never meant to pass into those of the
people. Hence, to invite the community, with-
out distinction, to the study of the gospel, exhort-
ing them to regulate their present conduct, and
their hopes and fears in relation to the future,
purely by its sanctions, is described as the as-
sumption of ground for which no precedent could
be pleaded, and is justly viewed as threatening
the existing fabric of ecclesiastical power with
dissolution.

Previous to the conquest, and through a con-
siderable interval afterwards, there was little evil
to be apprehended from any such employment
of the Bible. The repose of ignorance was too
profound to be readily broken, and the vassalage,
both of the body and of the mind, had been too
little disturbed to admit of being speedily re-
moved. But in the age of Wycliffe, the aspect of
society in England retained but a faint tracing
of its earlier features. The augmented population
of the country, the progress of commerce, and of
a representative government, and the partial
revival of learning, had all contributed to im-
provement; and together with the bolder en-
croachments of the papacy, and that spirit of
complaint and resistance which these had pro-
duced, were pre-eminently favourable to the zeal

CHAP. II. of our reformer as employed in applying the popular language to the pure records of the gospel. His antagonists, we have seen, were by no means insensible to the probable results of the enterprise in which his energies were engaged; and to his own discernment, they were obvious in a much greater degree. He knew that to render the contents of the Bible familiar to the people, was to introduce a light which must impart a faithful colouring to the actions of men; and that ignorance, and irreligion, might well tremble for their sway, when thus brought into nearest connection with their opposites. Nearly twenty years had now passed since his first dispute with the mendicants; and during this period his writings disclose a growing conviction as to the sufficiency of the scriptures, and the importance of the right of private judgment. The success, also, which attended his discussions on these points, evidently prepared him for his present effort; the effect of which, according to his enemies, was to make the matters of the gospel revelation better known to the laity, and even to females, than they had hitherto been to the most distinguished among the clergy.¹⁷

1379.

¹⁷ Knighton, Col. 2644. Another fact, which was highly favourable to this great work of the reformer, is thus briefly and luminously stated by Mr. Baber: "Englishmen were now beginning to be more attentive to their own tongue. Before the conquest, the popular language had been invaded by the Normannic. After that event, as the Norman lords increased in power, their tongue became the language of polished society,

" of the laws, and of the pleadings in
 " the courts of judicature. Latin was
 " used for the services of the church,
 " and the general purposes of literature; and the Anglo-Saxon remained chiefly confined to the commonalty. In the thirteenth century, the popular language began in some degree to recover its rank; the nobles, and the higher classes of society, did not, as heretofore, disdain to resort to it as a colloquial tongue; and ori-

Some extracts, illustrative of the arguments with which the reformer opposed the clamours of his adversaries on this question, will be expected by the reader. These we might select from nearly the whole of his writings, subsequent to the year 1378. In one of his earliest vindications he thus writes; “As it is certain that the truth of the christian faith becomes more evident the more the faith itself is known, and that lord bishops condemn in the ear of secular lords what is faithful and true, on account of hatred to the person who maintains it,—honest men are bound to declare the doctrine which they hold, not only in Latin, but in the vulgar tongue, that the truth may be more plainly and more widely known.” The writer then refers to an English treatise which he had previously addressed to secular lords, and in which he had urged them to regulate their life “solely according to the law of Christ.” That work is now lost, but the Latin

CHAP.
II.

Wycliffe's
manner of
defending
his conduct
on this point

“ginal works, as well as translations from the productions of authors who had written in French, now began to appear in an English dress. But at this period, it must be allowed, our language was rough and unpolished, and those who wrote in it were authors who possessed few ideas of taste or elegance. In proportion, however, as the tyrannical power of the barons declined, and as the paths which led to honour and distinction became more open to commoners, the English tongue, in the fourteenth century, became more general, and its improvements were considerable. The accessions it had received, and the changes it had experienced within the last three centuries, were at this

“period numerous and striking; for our language, as it was now spoken by the noble and the learned, was considerably enriched by words borrowed from the Roman and French dialects, and much altered in its pronunciation, its form, and its terminations. Among the lower orders of the people, however, upon whom refinement makes but slow advances, English, with respect to its great mass, preserved more of its Saxon origin and phraseology. Such was the state of the vernacular tongue at the time in which Wiclif wrote. The reformer quickly discerned the advantage which might be derived from this propitious circumstance.”
—Memoirs of Wiclif, 36, 37.

CHAP. composition, under the same title, is preserved,
II. and in this the author proceeds to state that
“ those heretics ought not to be heard, who ima-
“ gine that temporal lords should not possess
“ the law of God, but that it is sufficient for them
“ to know what may be learnt from the lips of
“ their priests and prelates.” The error of this
doctrine is thus exposed: “ As the faith of the
“ church is contained in the scriptures, the more
“ these are known in an orthodox sense, the bet-
“ ter. And since secular men should assuredly
“ understand the faith, it should be taught them
“ in whatever language is best known to them.
“ Inasmuch, also, as the doctrines of our faith
“ are more clearly and precisely expressed in the
“ scriptures, than they may possibly be by priests,
“ —seeing, if one may venture so to speak, that
“ many prelates are but too ignorant of scripture,
“ while others conceal parts of scripture,—and as
“ the verbal instructions of priests have many
“ other defects, the conclusion is abundantly
“ plain, that believers should ascertain for them-
“ selves the matters of their faith, by having the
“ scriptures in a language which they fully under-
“ stand. Besides, it was by faith, as described
“ by the apostle (Heb. chap. xi.), that the saints
“ of old overcame kingdoms, and hastened to
“ their own country. Why then should not the
“ things of faith be disclosed to the people now,
“ so that they may comprehend them more
“ clearly? He, in consequence, who shall pre-
“ vent this, or murmur against it, does his utmost
“ to continue the people in a state of unbelief,
“ and condemnation. Hence, also, the laws made

“ by prelates are not to be received as matters of CHAP.
 “ faith, nor are we to confide in their public in- II.
 “ structions, or in any of their words, but as they
 “ are founded on holy writ; for according to the
 “ constant doctrine of Augustine, the scriptures
 “ contain the whole of truth;¹⁸ and this translation
 “ of them should therefore do at least this good,
 “ viz. placing bishops and priests above suspicion
 “ as to the parts of it which they profess to ex-
 “ plain. Other means also, as prelates, the pope,
 “ and friars, may prove defective; and to provide
 “ against this, Christ, and his apostles, evangelized
 “ the greater portion of the world, by making
 “ known the scriptures in a language which was
 “ familiar to the people. To this end, indeed,
 “ did the Holy Spirit endow them with the know-
 “ ledge of all tongues. Why, therefore, should
 “ not the living disciples of Christ do as they did,
 “ opening the scriptures to the people so clearly
 “ and plainly that they may verily understand
 “ them, since, except to the unbeliever disposed
 “ to resist the Holy Spirit, the things contained in
 “ scripture are no fiction?” The reformer then
 solemnly inculcates the doctrine of individual
 responsibility, as extending to all the matters of
 faith and practice. From the certainty, also, that
 the answer of a prelate or a canonist will be of no
 avail, in the day when each man shall stand before
 the judgment-seat of the Redeemer, he again vin-
 dicates his appeal to the right of private judgment,
 and urges on the laity the duty of a devout atten-

¹⁸ *Doctrina Christiana*, lib. ii. in fine
 ep. ad Volusianum, cited by Lewis,
 c. v. Walden, the known antagonist
 of Wycliffe, affirmed, that “the de-

“ crees of bishops in the church, are
 “ of greater authority and dignity than
 “ is the authority of the scriptures.”
 Walden. *Doc. Tri. i. lib. ii. c. 21.*

CHAP. II. tion to whatever may promote their faith in the grace of the Saviour, and obedience to his will. From motives thus enlightened, did Wycliffe prosecute his translation of the Bible. How far he was assisted in this great work is unknown. There is a notice attached to one of his Bibles, which attributes a translation of a portion of Baruch to Nicholas Hereford. The statement is written in less durable ink than the volume itself, and in a different hand, but is probably correct. We know that copies of the whole, or of parts, of the scriptures, in the language of the people, were now multiplied with surprising rapidity.¹⁹

Among the manuscripts which have escaped

¹⁹ MS. Speculum Secularium Dominorum. Usser. De Script. 160. c. v. Lewis, c. v. Baber's Historical Account, 69. When certain objections were urged against translating the scriptures into English, it was remarked that the same might be said of rendering them from the Greek into Latin, since it was certain that the Latins had not always used their version without abusing it. And men there were, who did not hesitate to go the length of affirming, that evil must result from submitting the scriptures to an indiscriminate inspection in any language. It is thus that William Butler, a Franciscan, and an opponent of Wycliffe, writes on this point: "The prelates ought not to allow that any person should read the scriptures translated into Latin, at pleasure; because, as experience proves, this has been the occasion of many falling into heresies and errors. It is not, therefore, wise that any one, whensoever and wheresoever he will, should be left to the eager study of the scriptures."—Usser. De Script. 163. Lewis, c. v. Such was the danger apprehended from this source, that some twenty years after Wycliffe's decease,

it was made a law of the university of Oxford "that no man should learn divinity, neither holy writ, except he had done his form in art; that is, that hath commenced in art, and hath been regent two years after, which would be nine years, or ten, before he would learn holy writ!"—Elucidarium Bibliorum, c. xiii.

Previous to the decision of the council of Trent on that subject, many sound catholics discarded the apocryphal writings, which had become appended to the Old Testament. (Cosin, on the Canon.) Wycliffe was guided chiefly by the authority of Jerome, and retained only such books in the sacred canon as are at present received by the protestant churches. "Satis est (ecclesiam) pro sua militiâ habere 22 libros de veteri testamento authenticos * * * Non oportet ecclesiam militantem illis libris credere tanquam authenticis. MS. De Veritate Scripturæ." Yet to the close of his life he continued to cite the apocryphal books as a reputable, though not as an inspired authority. An extract from the reformer's translation of the Old Testament may be seen in the Appendix, No. I.

the destroying hand of our native inquisitors, are several which appear to have been completed before the decease of the reformer. The effect we learn from other sources besides the invectives of Knighton. It was at no mean cost of labour, reproach, and danger; and with a view, evidently, to the accomplishment of the most important ends, that this service was performed. The achievement, indeed, is one, which of itself must vest the name of Wycliffe with a peculiar halo, in the recollections of every man regarding the dissolution of the papal thralldom in this island, as the fall of ignorance, oppression, and impiety.

But while the reformer was employed in this master-effort to enlighten the piety of his countrymen, an insurrection broke out among the populace, and one which appeared to threaten the overthrow of every established authority. The event fills a prominent place in the general history of this period, and the enemies of Wycliffe cease not to insinuate, that the violence of the insurgents arose, in no small degree, from the tendency of his projected innovations. Had the name of our reformer been wholly unconnected with this memorable occurrence, a distinct notice of its causes and character would not have been foreign from the design of the present work. The zeal of his adversaries has rendered this indispensable. The inquiry, however, would interrupt our narrative very considerably, and I have therefore thought it proper to place the substance of what may be known on this subject, in a note at the end of the volume.²⁰

CHAP.
II.
Insurrection
of the com-
mons.

²⁰ See Note A.

CHAPTER III.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION—OPPOSED BY BERENGARIUS—AND BY THE VAUDOIS AND ALBIGENSES—NOT RECOGNISED BY THE ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH—DEFENDED BY LANFRANC, AND ESPOUSED BY THE ANGLO-NORMAN CLERGY.—WYCLIFFE'S OPPOSITION TO IT.—SEVERE PENALTIES TO BE INFLICTED ON ALL WHO SHOULD FAVOUR HIS OPINIONS CONCERNING IT.—HIS APPEAL TO THE CIVIL POWER FOR PROTECTION.—HIS FEELING UNDER THESE PERSECUTIONS.—ANALYSIS OF HIS "WICKET."—PROCEEDINGS OF COURTNEY, AND THE SYNOD AT THE GREY FRIARS.—WYCLIFFE FAVOURED BY THE UNIVERSITY.—STATE OF PARTIES IN THE NATION UNFRIENDLY TO THE EFFORTS OF THE REFORMERS.—INQUISITORIAL STATUTE OBTAINED BY THE CLERGY.—NOTICE OF ROBERT RIGGE, DR. HEREFORD, REPPINGTON, ASHTON, AND OTHERS.

CHAP.
III.Transub-
stantiation.Opposed by
Berenga-
rius.

It has appeared, that until the middle of the ninth century, the manner in which the body and the blood of Christ are present in the eucharist, was the subject of debate, or rather of a peaceful difference of sentiment, among persons holding the chief dignities of the hierarchy. The same may be said of a considerable interval afterwards. But from that period, and from causes which have also been explained,¹ the advocates of the mysterious dogma, which in the twelfth century began to be designated transubstantiation, rapidly increased. Its progress, however, was far from being uninterrupted; and among its opponents the most distinguished place must be allotted to Berengarius, a gallic prelate, who about the middle of the eleventh century brought his genius

¹ Prelim. View, c. i. sect. 3.

and learning, which were both greatly above the character of the age, to an investigation of its claims. His doctrine was strictly that of the primitive church, and of the existing protestant communities. The zeal and ability with which it was supported, diffused his name through Europe, and attracted the enmity or admiration of the clergy through the western nations. In the cause of his opinions, the disputant patiently submitted to the spiritual censures of the pontiff, and of a council assembled at Paris; and the displeasure of his sovereign, which his zeal had provoked, was followed by the forfeiture of his episcopal revenues. The burden of such evils was probably lightened by remembering that his disciples in France, in Italy, in England, and particularly in the states of Germany, were numerous and increasing. But such, it appears, was the extent of the suffering, which this advocate of truth and reason was prepared to endure in defence of his tenets. Thrice was he compelled to appear at Rome; and as often was his doctrine formally renounced, only to be again avowed, as the prospect of impunity returned. Toward the close of life, he retired from the agitated scenes which for more than thirty years had been familiar to him; and the remembrance of the indecision, which had been allowed to sully his character, is said to have embittered his seclusion. But he died with the reputation of sanctity, and his followers never became extinct.²

The Vaudois and Albigenses, who had never embraced the marvellous theory adverted to, were

And by the
Vaudois and
Albigenses.

Mosheim, ii. 558—569, where this subject is fully and luminously treated.

CHAP. III. invigorated in their opposition to it by the labours of Berengarius and his partisans. That the sectaries had adopted the heresy of that prelate, was often urged as their reproach; and it is evident from certain fragments of their reasoning on this subject, which their enemies have preserved, that, had the assertion been correct, the disciple must have been frequently acknowledged as by no means unworthy of his master. From one of their adversaries, we learn, that they were accustomed to appeal to the Apostles' Creed, and to that of Nice, and Athanasius, as including every important article of christian doctrine; expressing their surprise, that in these summaries of religious truth, no reference should be made to the matter of transubstantiation, though a doctrine so greatly needing the aid of external evidence to counteract, in some degree, its intrinsic, and surpassing difficulties. These perplexities, also, the same fraternities are described as exposing with a severity of criticism, which must often have bewildered their antagonists; urging with fluency almost every question tending to involve the subject in mystery, contradiction, or absurdity.³

³ See Prelim. View, c. i. sec. ii. The celebrated schoolman Alanus Magnus, thus describes the manner in which these contemporary heretics opposed this dogma of the church. "If the bread should be changed every day into the body of Christ, it would be infinitely increased. They inquire also whether the bread ceaseth to be, and if it ceaseth to be, then it is annihilated, and so it is spoiled. Also they ask, how a body of so great a bulk can enter into the mouth of a man? Whether the body of Christ be eaten,

"chewed with the teeth, and consequently divided into parts? Whether the bread becomes the body of Christ? because then it will really be the body of Christ—that is to say, something else than it is. Whether the bread becomes the body of Christ? because, if so, then bread will be the matter of Christ's body. Also, after transubstantiation, the accidents remain; if so they must be in another subject—as for instance, in the air. But if it be there, then some part of the

CHAP.
III.

But we are principally concerned to know the fate of this doctrine in England. Our Saxon ancestors were in general sufficiently obedient to the opinions and customs of the papacy, and we may believe that the doctrine of transubstantiation was not unknown, nor wholly unapproved, by their spiritual guides. We have, however, the most decisive proof, that the dogma so named, formed no part of the national creed in the tenth century. Elfric, a contemporary of St. Dunstan, and the correspondent and associate of the principal ecclesiastics of that period, has adverted in one of his epistles to the elements of the eucharist in a manner which incidentally, but most distinctly, proscribes the doctrine of a “real presence.” This letter was addressed to Wulfstan, archbishop of York, and as its translation into the vernacular language was in compliance with the request of that prelate, it must be admitted as

Not recognized by the Anglo-Saxon church.

“ air must be round, and savory, and
“ white; and as this form is carried
“ through divers places, so the accidents change their subject. Again,
“ these accidents abide in the same
“ part of the air, and so solidity will
“ be in the air; because they are
“ solid, and consequently the air will
“ be solid. Hence it appears that
“ these accidents are not in the air,
“ neither are they in the body of
“ Christ, neither can any other body
“ be assigned in its place, in which
“ they shall appear to be, and therefore the accidents do not merely
“ seem to remain. Again, when the
“ form or figure in which the body
“ of Christ lieth, is divided into
“ parts, the body of Christ continues
“ no longer in that figure which it had
“ before—how, therefore, can the

“ body of Christ be in every part of
“ that host? Again, if the body of
“ Christ be hid in that little form,
“ where is the head, and where the
“ foot?—as a consequence his members must be undistinguishable.
“ Again, Christ gave his body to his
“ disciples before his passion. Now
“ he gave it them either mortal or immortal; yet if he gave it immortal, it is certain that then it was
“ mortal, and consequently while it is
“ really mortal it was yet immortal,
“ which is impossible.”—Alanus contra Albigenses, &c. c. l. cited in the Latin from Alanus, by Dr. Allix, in his remarks on the Churches of the Albigenses, c. xvi. 146. The above are a few only of the queries with which the heretics were accustomed to perplex the faith of the orthodox.

CHAP. a document of no mean authority.⁴ According
 III. to this writer, the “ housel is Christ’s body, not
 “ bodily, but spiritually. Not the body which
 “ he suffered in, but the body of which he spake
 “ when he blessed bread and wine, a night before
 “ his sufferings.” “ ‘The apostle,’ he observes,
 “ has said of the Hebrews, that they all did eat
 “ the same ghostly meat, and they all did drink
 “ the same ghostly drink. And this he said, not
 “ bodily, but ghostly, Christ being not yet born,
 “ nor his blood shed when that the people of
 “ Israel ate that meat, and drank of that stone.
 “ And the stone was not bodily, though he so
 “ said. It was the same mystery in the old law,
 “ and they did ghostly signify that ghostly
 “ ‘ housel ’ of our Saviour’s body which we con-
 “ secrate now.” In his homily, “ appointed in
 “ the reign of the Saxons to be spoken unto the
 “ people at Easter,” the doctrine of Elfric, and
 of the Anglo-Saxon clergy in relation to this ser-
 vice, is more fully exhibited. He there repeats
 his allusion to the manna, and the rock of the
 wilderness, and speaks of the bread in the chris-
 tian sacrament as being the body of Christ, only
 as the waters of baptism may be said to be the
 divinity of the Holy Spirit. In describing the
 difference between the body Christ suffered in,
 and the body that is hallowed to “ housel,” he
 states that the one was born of the flesh of Mary,

⁴ The work from which I quote has
 the following title page: “ A Testi-
 “ monie of Antiquitie, showing the
 “ auncient sayth in the church of En-
 “ gland, touching the sacrament of the
 “ body and blood of the Lord, here

“ publicly preached, and also received
 “ in the Saxon tyme above 600 years
 “ ago. Printed by John Day, beneath
 “ St. Martyns, Cum Privilegio Regiæ
 “ Maiestatis.” 1567.

and that the other is gathered of many corns; and that “nothing therefore is to be understood therein bodily, but all is ghostly to be understood.” The bread which is farther described, as having bodily shape, is again contrasted with the body of Christ, which is said to be present, only in its “ghostly might.” The body also in which Christ rose from the dead never dieth, but the consecrated bread is declared to be temporal, not eternal. The latter is divided into parts, and some receive a larger portion, and some a less; but the body of Christ “after ghostly mystery” is undivided, and equally in all. This series of distinctions the writer concludes by observing, that the things appealing to the senses in the eucharist, are a pledge and figure, while Christ’s body is truth itself.

CHAP.
III.

The authenticity of this production is beyond suspicion, and that the printed copy is correctly given from the original is attested by archbishop Parker, by his brother of York, and by the suffragans of both.

But though it is thus certain that the mystery of transubstantiation was not among the recognised doctrines of the Anglo-Saxon hierarchy, its general adoption was to be among the immediate results of the conquest. By the transfer of the English sceptre to the hand of a Norman, the political influence of the pontiffs in this island was for a while materially impeded and restrained. But Lanfranc, who filled the see of Canterbury under the first William, was the most distinguished opponent of Berengarius; and from that period, to the age of Wycliffe, the faith of the

Defended
by Lanfranc.

Espoused
by the
Anglo-Nor-
man clergy.

CHAP. real presence was inculcated by the native clergy
 III. without any visible opposition.⁵

In attempting the overthrow of this doctrine, our reformer must have been aware of the danger and suffering to which the effort would expose him. And we must presume that evils so certain and serious would hardly have been encountered, had not the error to be assailed appeared to him as fraught with impiety and abuses of the most revolting description. Of the steps which led him so to regard it, and which determined his hostile movements relating to it, we are only partially informed. It is, however, by no means surprising, that a study of the scriptures, which had been devoutly pursued through so long an interval, and which had produced a renunciation of so many established opinions, should issue in the abandonment of a doctrine, containing the grossest of the insults, which priests, in their insolence of triumph, had bestowed on the prostrate capacities of their victims. Of the spirit with which Wycliffe addressed himself to this contest, we may judge from the following extract, which forms the introduction to one of his most popular pieces on the subject. “ Forasmuch as our Saviour, Jesus Christ, with the prophets who were before him, and the apostles who were presently with him, whom he also left after him, and whose hearts were mollified by the Holy Ghost—have warned us, and given us knowledge that there are two manners of ways, the one to life, the other to death, therefore pray

⁵ Mosheim, ii. 560.

“ we heartily to God, that he, of his mere mercy, CHAP.
 “ will so strengthen us with the grace and stedfast- III.
 “ ness of his Holy Spirit, as to make us strong in
 “ spiritual living according to the gospel, that so
 “ the world—no not the very infidels, papists, nor
 “ apostates, may gather any occasion to speak
 “ evil of us; that we may enter into that strait
 “ gate as Christ our Saviour, and all that follow
 “ him have done, not in idle living, but in diligent
 “ labouring—yea in great sufferance of persecu-
 “ tion, even to the death.”⁶

It was with sentiments thus devout, and a purpose thus matured, that Wycliffe commenced his attack on the received doctrine concerning the eucharist. The weakness and the contradictions inseparable from that tenet, would have been of themselves sufficient to justify a zealous opposition; but in the view of the reformer, the sin of the officiating priest was less the result of inattention than of impiety, and such as rendered him a false guide to the community, conducting his followers into the snares of a ruinous idolatry. The doctrine promulgated by Wycliffe on this point, is of such frequent occurrence in the course of his sermons, as to render it probable that it had been broached from the pulpit, prior to its admission into his lectures at Oxford. In these, however, a laborious prominence was assigned to it in the spring of 1381.⁷ Twelve conclusions were then published, in which he challenged the attention of the members of the university to his

⁶ MS. Ostiolum Wiclevi. This piece under the title of Wycliffe's Wicket.
 was printed at Norenberch, in 1546, ⁷ Wood, 188. Lewis, c. vi.

CHAP. III. exposition of this sacrament.⁸ In these, while admitting that the words of consecration conferred a peculiar, and even a mysterious dignity on the bread and wine, it was most distinctly stated that those elements were not to be considered, “as Christ, or as any part of him,” but “as an effectual sign of him.” To the easy faith of the majority, in that age, few things in religion could occur as difficult if sanctioned by the church. With others, it was a matter of strange perplexity, that the sensible qualities which had distinguished the bread of the eucharist previous to its consecration, should continue to all human perception precisely unaltered after that mystic ceremony had been performed. To counteract this inconvenient verdict of the senses, the genius of the mendicants struck out a new path in logical science. They affirmed that an accident, or the property of an object, as its whiteness, or its roundness, may be supposed to exist, even when the object itself had ceased to be. The discernment of Wycliffe was so deeply offended by this hardy assertion, that his writings from this period abound with allusions to it; nor does he hesitate to denounce it as an absurdity betraying so much fraudulence of temper, as to render its abettors altogether unworthy of the public confidence. In the conclusions now published, this favourite dogma of his old antagonists was especially condemned.

It will be supposed, that a tenet which artifice had rendered so subservient to the interests of the

⁸ Appendix, No. II.

priesthood, was not thus assailed without exciting the most serious opposition. It appears, also, that much the larger portion of the honours of the university was possessed at this time by the religious orders, notwithstanding the various attempts to reduce their influence. The chancellor, William de Berton,—whether awed by their power, or truly alarmed by the intrepidity of Wycliffe, became a party to measures, which were speedily adopted with a view to prevent the diffusion of the new doctrine. In a convention of twelve doctors, eight of whom were either monks or mendicants, the reformer was represented as teaching, that in the sacrament of the altar, the substance of material bread and wine remained without change after the words of consecration were pronounced; and that in the same venerable sacrament, there is the body and blood of Christ, not essentially, nor substantially, nor even bodily, but figuratively or tropically—so that Christ is not there truly, or verily in his own bodily presence. To pass a sentence of reprobation upon opinions, which so completely destroyed the mystery of transubstantiation, would be the ready determination of such an assembly. It was accordingly agreed to describe these novelties as erroneous, as opposed to the decisions of the church, and to state it as the true doctrine of the eucharist, “that by the sacramental words, duly pronounced by the priest, the bread and wine upon the altar are transubstantiated, or substantially converted into the true body and blood of Christ—so that after consecration, there is not in that venerable sacrament the

CHAP.
III.Condemna-
tion of the
doctrine of
Wycliffe.

CHAP.
III.

“ material bread and wine which before existed,
 “ considered in their own substances or natures,
 “ but only the species of the same, under which
 “ are contained the true body of Christ, and his
 “ blood, not figuratively, nor tropically, but es-
 “ sentially, substantially, and corporally—so that
 “ Christ is verily there in his own proper bodily
 “ presence.” To protect these dogmas from the
 process of investigation with which they were
 now threatened, it was resolved that the sentence
 of the greater excommunication, suspension from
 all scholastic exercises, and the forfeiture of per-
 sonal liberty, should be incurred by any member
 of the University, who either in the schools or
 out of them, should inculcate the opinions pub-
 lished by Wycliffe. The same penalties were
 also adjudged, to such as should be convicted
 of listening to any defence of “ the two aforesaid
 “ erroneous assertions.”⁹

The meeting in which these resolutions were
 adopted appears to have been privately convened.
 The reformer was in the school of the Augus-
 tinians, seated in his chair as professor, and lec-
 turing amidst his pupils on this very doctrine,
 when a messenger entered the apartment, who, in
 the name of the chancellor, and of the divines his
 coadjutors, pronounced the above sentence re-
 lating to the sacrament of the altar, and such as
 should favour the recent heresies on that subject.

⁹ See Appendix, No. III. Leland, *De Script. Brit.* 379. Sir R. Twisden refers to the above censures, in support of this doctrine, as “ the first plenary
 “ determination of the church of En-
 “ gland” respecting it; and accordingly

concludes that “ the opinion of tran-
 “ substantiation, that brought so many
 “ to the stake, had not more than a
 “ hundred and forty years’ prescription
 “ before Martin Luther.”—*Historical Vindication*, 193, 194.

Wycliffe paused, as if taken by surprise, and in doubt as to the best mode of resisting the hostility which had so suddenly assumed this formidable shape. But a moment was sufficient to restore his confidence;—he then rose, complained of this substitution of brute force in the place of reason, and challenged the collected strength of his opponents to a fair refutation of his published opinions. He had often declared it to be the duty of the magistrate to protect the life, the property, and in all such cases as the present, the personal freedom of the subject. On this maxim he was now resolved to act with a firmness not inferior to that of his adversaries. The alternative placed before him, was silence or imprisonment; and the chancellor was therefore informed, that since it was resolved to punish the persons who should avow his doctrine with civil penalties, it was his own determination to appeal from the decision of his present judges to the protection of the civil power. *They* were looking to that power to crush opinion and investigation; *he* would look to it for an opposite purpose.¹⁰

His appeal
to the civil
power.

A considerable interval, however, was to elapse before the meeting of the next parliament, and it is probable that during that period the lectures of the reformer, as divinity professor, were devoted to topics less dangerous to his personal liberty. The prohibition of the chancellor, however, would be limited to the sphere of his particular jurisdiction, and it is to be observed, that even within the University, it referred only to oral communication. Wycliffe's province as rector of Lutterworth, was

¹⁰ Sudbury's Register, in Wilkins, iii. 170, 171.

CHAP.
III.Analysis of
his Wicket.

still open, and the partial silence imposed on his lips, would naturally impart an additional industry to his pen. His piece, intitled, *The Wicket*, was composed during this crisis. Before proceeding to the discussion which it was intended to embrace, the writer feelingly adverts to the treatment which he had recently experienced from “clerks of the law.” “These,” he observes, “have ever been against God the Lord, both in the old law, and in the new; slaying the prophets which spake to them the words of God. Yea, they spared not the Son of God, when the temporal judge would have delivered him. And so forth of the apostles and martyrs who have spoken truly of the word of God.” Thus, as the great foes of truth, instead of occupying the foreground in its defence, they are said to have denounced it as “heresy to speak of the holy scriptures in English;” and the same cause is said to have produced “the law which they have made on the sacred host.” In the latter, “the falsest belief” is declared to be inculcated, and of those who bow to its authority, worshipping the consecrated bread, it is inquired, “Where find you that ever Christ, or any of his apostles worshipped it?” Appealing to the ancient creeds which assert the eternity and immutability of the Saviour’s existence, he demands with solemnity, “may the thing made, turn again, and make him who made it? Thou then, that art an earthly man, by what reason mayest thou say that thou makest thy Maker?” Leaving this difficulty to be solved by the wisdom of orthodoxy, he next inquires, whether the body understood to be made

by the priest at the altar, must be considered as CHAP.
III.
 that of the Redeemer, previous or subsequent to
 his resurrection. If it be said to be the spiritual
 body in which he ascended to the Father, that,
 according to the scriptures, “the heavens must
 “receive until the restitution of all things.” If it
 be the body of Christ previous to his dissolution,
 then is it one which has yet to die, since the
 scriptures which speak of his incarnation, speak
 no less distinctly of his agony and death. From
 this dilemma, the reformer proceeds to object to
 the received interpretation of the words, “This is
 “my body.” These he contends, are improperly
 regarded as being at all the words of consecration,
 since it is evident, from the mode of their intro-
 duction in the gospel, that they related simply to
 the act of distribution. “Seek ye busily,” he
 writes, “if ye can find two words of blessing or
 “giving of thanks wherewith Christ made his
 “body and blood of the bread and wine. For if
 “ye might once find out those words, then should
 “ye wax great masters above Christ, and then
 “ye might be givers of his substance, and as fa-
 “thers, and makers of him, he should worship you,
 “as it is written, ‘Thou shalt worship thy father
 “and thy mother.’ Of such as desire such wor-
 “ship against the law of God, speaks St. Paul,
 “when writing of the Man of sin, that advanceth
 “himself as he were God. Whether our clergy
 “be guilty of this, judge ye, or they who know
 “most.” The conclusion resulting from this doc-
 trine, he remarks, is, “that the thing which is
 “not God to-day, shall be God to-morrow—yea,
 “that the thing which is without spirit of life, but

CHAP. III. "groweth in the field by nature, shall another
"time be God! and still we ought to believe,
"that God is without beginning and without
"ending!" The men who could be insensible to
these impossibilities, or perceiving them, were so
impious as to pretend to believe the doctrine
which involved them, are reminded of the Mosaic
account of the creation, and are required to
imitate that achievement of Deity, before they
pretend to give existence to his attributes. "If
"ye cannot make the works which he made,
"how," it is demanded, "shall ye make Him who
"made them?" To avoid the difficulty which
arose from teaching that each portion of the sa-
cramental bread became the undivided body of
Christ, it was usual to remark, that though a
glass should be broken into a multitude of pieces,
yet each fragment retained the power of reflecting
the same countenance. But this unfortunate
exercise of ingenuity is noticed by the reformer
as favourable to *his* doctrine, and at variance with
that of his opponents, since in every such frag-
ment, "it is not the very face, but the figure
"thereof" which is perceptible, "and just so," it is
observed, "the bread is the figure of Christ's
"body." And as the Redeemer meant not a
material cup when that term was employed by
him in the agony of the garden, and in his pre-
vious address to the sons of Zebedee, it is affirmed
to be reasonable that we attach a figurative mean-
ing to certain of his expressions which occur in
connexion with the last supper. With the fol-
lowing paragraphs the work concludes. "There-
"fore let every man wisely, with meek prayers,

“ and great study, and also with charity, read CHAP.
III.
 “ the words of God, and holy scriptures. But ———
 “ many of you are like the mother of Zebedee’s
 “ children, to whom Christ said, ‘ Thou wottest not
 “ what thou askest.’ You wot not what ye ask,
 “ nor what ye do.’ For if ye did, ye would not
 “ blaspheme God as ye do, setting an alien god,
 “ instead of the living God. Christ saith, ‘ I am
 “ a very vine.’ Wherefore worship ye not the
 “ vine for God, as ye do the bread? Wherein was
 “ Christ a very vine? or wherein was the bread
 “ Christ’s body? It was in figurative speech,
 “ which is hidden to the understanding of sinners.
 “ And thus, as Christ became not a material nor
 “ an earthly vine, nor a material vine the body of
 “ Christ, so neither is material bread changed
 “ from its substance to the flesh and blood of
 “ Christ. Have you not read that when Christ
 “ came into the temple, they asked of him what
 “ token he would give that they might believe him,
 “ and he answered, ‘ Cast down this temple, and
 “ in three days I will raise it again,’ which words
 “ were fulfilled in his rising from the dead. But
 “ when he said, ‘ Undo this temple,’ in that he
 “ meant thus, they were deceived, for they under-
 “ stood it fleshly, and thought that he had spoken
 “ of the temple at Jerusalem, because he stood in
 “ it. And therefore, at his passion, they accused
 “ him full falsely, for he spake of the temple of
 “ his blessed body, which rose again on the third
 “ day. And just so Christ spake of his holy body,
 “ when he said, ‘ This is my body which shall be
 “ given for you,’ which was given to death, and
 “ unto rising again to bliss for all that shall be

CHAP.
III.

“ saved by him. But just as they falsely ac-
 “ cused him respecting the temple of Jerusalem,
 “ so, now-a days, they accuse falsely against
 “ Christ, and say that he spake of the bread which
 “ he brake among his apostles. For in that
 “ Christ said this figuratively they are deceived,
 “ taking it fleshly, and turning it to the material
 “ bread, as the Jews did in the matter of the
 “ temple. And on this foul misunderstanding they
 “ make ‘the abomination of discomfort,’ which is
 “ spoken of by the prophet Daniel, as standing
 “ in the holy place.—He that readeth, let him
 “ understand. Now, therefore, pray we heartily
 “ to God, that this evil time may be made short
 “ for the sake of the chosen men, as he hath
 “ promised in his holy gospel, and that the large
 “ and broad way that leadeth to perdition may
 “ be stopped, and that the strait and narrow way
 “ that leadeth to bliss may be made open by the
 “ holy scriptures, that we may know what is
 “ the will of God, to serve him with certainty
 “ and holiness, and in fear, that we may find by
 “ him the way of bliss everlasting.” Such was
 the doctrine of Wycliffe, in relation to the eucha-
 rist. As the person who is raised to prelatical
 or princely dignity is still a man, so it was af-
 firmed, the bread, exalted as it may be from the
 purposes to which it is applied in the sacrament
 of the altar is, in every property, what it pre-
 viously was; and the doctrine of transubstantia-
 tion is accordingly treated as the strange result of
 attaching a literal import to metaphorical expres-
 sions.¹¹

¹¹ Trialogus, lib. iv. c. iv. vii.

It will be in the recollection of the reader, that the summer of 1381 became memorable from the insurrection of the commons,¹² and that Wycliffe's public opposition to the tenet now adverted to commenced about the same period. On the 14th of June, in that year, the see of Canterbury became vacant by the death of Simon Sudbury; and in the October following, it was filled by Courtney, previously bishop of London. The translation of this prelate was secured by a bull of Urban the sixth, and the obligation thus conferred on the new primate, by his ecclesiastical sovereign, increased his scrupulous submission to the pleasure of the papacy. Until the pall, which custom had rendered the badge of his present dignity, was procured from Rome, the jurisdiction of his see and its usual insignia were declined. But this ornament obtained, the archiepiscopal staff was assumed; and the ecclesiastic, who, as bishop of the capital, had shewn the most zealous opposition to the opinions of our reformer, avowed his determination to employ the whole of his more extended influence to complete their extirpation.¹³

Early in May, in the year 1382, this "pillar of the church," as he was described by the orthodox, deemed himself canonically invested with the primacy, and two days subsequent a parliament was convened at Westminster. The mandates of the archbishop were immediately issued, calling a synod to deliberate as to the decisions proper to be adopted with regard to certain strange and

CHAP.
III.

In 1382
Courtney
was
made
archbishop

Proceedings
of Courtney.

¹² From the proclamation in Rymer, vii. 311, it appears that the storm

began to lower early in the spring.

¹³ Wake's State of the Church, 313.

CHAP. dangerous opinions said to be widely diffused,
 III.

Synod at
 the Grey
 Friars, May
 17, 1382.

“as well among the nobility as the commons of this realm of England.” On the seventeenth of the same month, an assembly was accordingly convened, including eight prelates, fourteen doctors of the civil, and of the canon law, six bachelors of divinity, fifteen mendicants, and four monks. A residence of the grey friars in the metropolis was the place of meeting; and the policy of the archbishop appears to have been, to procure a formal condemnation of the tenets of the reformers, and then to commence an unsparing prosecution of such as should hesitate to renounce them. Nor was this mode of procedure more vigorously chosen than pursued. It happened, however, that the synod had scarcely approached the matters to be adjusted by its wisdom, when the city was shaken by an earthquake. The courage of the parties assembled was so far impaired by this event, that some ventured to express their doubts whether the object before them might not be displeasing to heaven, and it began to be uncertain whether the meeting would not dissolve without coming to any decision. But the ready genius of the primate who presided, conferred a different meaning on the incident, comparing the dispersion of noxious vapours, produced by such convulsions, with the purity which should be secured to the church, as the result of the present struggle to remove the pestilent from her communion. The courage of the wavering being thus restored, twenty-four conclusions were read as those which had been preached, “generally, commonly, and publicly,

“ ——— through the province of Canterbury, and CHAP.
 “ the realm of England.” After the “ good deli- III.
 “ beration” of three days, it was agreed, that ten
 of these conclusions were heretical, and the re-
 maining were declared to be erroneous.

The statements condemned as heretical related to the sacrament of the altar as including no change in the substance of the bread and wine—to priests and bishops as forfeiting their power, as such, by yielding to deadly sin—to auricular confession as unnecessary—to clerical endowments as unlawful—and to the claims of a depraved pontiff as derivable from the edicts of the emperor, but not from the gospel. In the propositions described as erroneous, the accused are made to say, that a prelate excommunicating any man without knowing him to be so judged of God, is himself a heretic, and excommunicated—that to prohibit appeals from the tribunal of the clergy to that of the king, is to incur the guilt of treason—that priests and deacons are all empowered to preach the gospel without waiting for the sanction of popes or prelates—that to forego this service from the fear of clerical censures, must be to appear as a traitor to God in the day of doom—that temporal lords may deprive an offending clergy of their possessions—that tythes are merely alms, to be yielded to the clergy only as they are devout men, and according to the discretion of the contributors—and finally, that the institutions of the religious are in themselves sinful, and tend in many ways to the injury of piety.¹⁴

¹⁴ Wilkins, iii. 157. Lewis, c. vi. Lewis, states that the earthquake noticed in the preceding page took place
 The Godstow chronicle, cited by Mr.

CHAP.
III.Progress of
persecution.

That some of these doctrines were correctly attributed to the avowed disciples of Wycliffe, will not be disputed, but others appear to have derived a part of their complexion from the prejudice of adversaries. The pomp, however, of that authority which had condemned the whole, is frequently appealed to in vindication of the measures which were now adopted to suppress them. Courtney was fully aware, that the university, which had so long been the residence of our reformer, was scarcely more fertile of heresy than the metropolis of the kingdom. A letter was accordingly addressed to the bishop of London, in which, having announced himself as metropolitan of all England, and legate of the apostolic see, the archbishop laments, that in contempt of certain canons which had wisely restricted the office of preaching, whether publicly or privately, to such as are sanctioned by the holy see, or by their prelates, many were every where found teaching doctrines subversive of the whole church, “infecting many well-meaning
“christians, and causing them to wander grievously from the catholic communion, without
“which there is no salvation.” The bishop is then reminded of the high authority by which the propositions referred to had been declared heretical and false; and he is, in conclusion, exhorted, in common with all his brethren suffragans of Canterbury, “To admonish, and warn, that no
“man do henceforth hold, preach, or defend the

about one o'clock in the forenoon of the Wednesday previous to Whitsuntide, which was May 30th. (c. vi. 106.)

This was probably a second convulsion, for the meeting of the synod took place nearly a fortnight earlier.

“foresaid heresies, and errors, or any of them.” CHAP.
III.

To secure this object it is required, that neither himself, nor his brethren in the prelacy, do admit any suspected persons to the liberty of preaching—that they listen not to the abettors of the above pernicious tenets—that they lean not to them, either publicly or privately, but rather shun them as serpents who diffuse pestilence and poison—and that this be done on pain of the greater excommunication, that being the sentence denounced on all, and every one, who shall be found in these things disobedient.¹⁵

That the greater publicity might be given to this crusade against heresy, it was arranged, that during the ensuing Whitsuntide, a religious procession should pass through the streets of London. On the appointed day, the attention of the populace was arrested by numbers of the clergy and laity moving bare-footed towards St. Paul's. There a carmelite friar ascended the pulpit, and informed the mourning multitude of their duty with regard to the church and her enemies at this foreboding crisis. But it has appeared that the commands of the archbishop, which doubtless produced this edifying spectacle, were not only addressed to the bishop of the metropolis, but to the whole of the prelates his suffragans. A copy of the primate's letter was, accordingly, conveyed to Wycliffe's diocesan, the bishop of Lincoln; and to secure a speedy and certain execution of its instructions, official documents were immediately addressed by this prelate to the abbots and priors, and the different officers, even to the

¹⁵ Fox. Acts and Monuments, i. 569. Knighton, 2650, 2651.

CHAP. III. rectors, vicars, and parochial chaplains, throughout the district to which the church of Lutterworth pertained. That church is described, as in the deanery of Goodlaxton, in the archdeaconry of Leicester. And it will be presumed, that while every clergyman in the neighbourhood of the reformer was thus canonically admonished of his obligations in relation to the heresy of the times, Wycliffe himself would not fail to receive his share of the salutary warning. There were causes, however, by which the proceedings meditated against him were for a while delayed.¹⁶

May 24.

Connected with these attempts to diffuse a spirit of persecution through the provinces by the agency of the prelates, were similar efforts with respect to the seats of learning. At this period one Peter Stokes, a carmelite, and a doctor of divinity, had distinguished himself, in Oxford, by the ardour with which he had opposed the new opinions. His conduct in this particular procured him the notice and the patronage of the archbishop, who, in a letter, dated a week subsequent to the meeting at the Grey Friars, enjoins it upon the zealous mendicant to publish the decisions of that assembly through the university. In this document, which is nearly a transcript of that sent to the bishops, the primate adverts to the contempt of all episcopal sanctions observable in the conduct of the new preachers; to their doctrine as subversive of the faith in which alone there is salvation; and to the high authority of the synod by which their novelties had been condemned; and proceeding to inculcate, that to refuse the

¹⁶ Knighton, 2650. Fox. Acts and Monuments, ubi supra. Lewis.

needful aid for saving men from destruction, is to become chargeable with their blood, he commands that the persons maintaining the heresies and errors specified, be holden in the strictest abhorrence, under the penalty of the great anathema.¹⁷

CHAP.
III.

It was of little avail, however, to dispatch such instructions to the university, while its chancellor, and so large a portion of its members, were the secret, if not the open adherents of the persecuted. That office, which in the preceding year had been sustained by William de Berton, was now filled by Robert Rigge, a scholar who exposed himself to much inconvenience and suffering from his attachment to certain of the reformer's opinions. In the records of this period, the name of Dr. Nicholas Hereford is also of frequent occurrence, as that of a principal follower of Wycliffe. Before the assembling of the late synod, this divine, to use the language of the primate, had been "vehemently suspected of heresy." At this moment, however, and while the inquisitorial purposes of the archbishop were sufficiently known, Hereford is called by the chancellor to preach before the university; and the service which thus devolved upon him was deemed the most honourable of its class through the year. A similar mark of approbation, it appears, was conferred, at about the same period, on Ralph Rippington, who was also doctor of divinity, and equally an admirer of Wycliffe; and the discourses of both are described as containing a passionate eulogy on the character and the

Wycliffe favoured by the university.

¹⁷ See Appendix, No. IV.

CHAP.
III.

general doctrine of the reformer. But this exercise of the chancellor's authority was instantly reported to the archbishop, and an expostulatory letter was suddenly dispatched, advising a more dutiful employment of his influence. It required him indeed to loathe the opinions and the intercourse "of these presumptuous men," and, as he would not himself be suspected of heretical pravity, to afford immediate aid to Peter Stokes, that the letters possessed by him might be duly published, and that the reign of a sect, against which the king and the lords had promised to unite their authority, might at length be brought to its close.¹⁸

Circumstances at this moment unfriendly to the efforts of the reformers.

The statement of the primate, as to the intentions of the court, was not without foundation. Richard was now in the sixteenth year of his age. The failure of some martial preparations, which engaged the attention of his government during the earlier period of his reign, involved his exchequer in the most serious difficulties. And the efforts of his ministers to extricate the vessel of the state, served only to increase its perils, until an insurrection, and such as had been hitherto unknown in our history, threatened the extinction of every privileged order in the kingdom. The zeal and ingenuity of such churchmen as the present archbishop, would not be slow in suggesting to the young monarch, that the convulsions which had recently shaken the kingdom must be expected to return; and, that their object in some evil hour must be achieved, should the present rector of Lutterworth, and his numerous disciples be allowed to continue their appeal to

¹⁸ Fox. Acts, &c.

the passions of the populace. Under the known CHAP.
disaffection of the commons, it became, also, a III.
point of peculiar moment to propitiate the clergy. Their wealth might enable the government to abolish, or at least to abridge, that system of taxation, which had recently goaded the people into madness. Lancaster, too, who during the late commotions, had been employed in treating with the Scots on the border, had shared much in the resentment of the insurgents. And there were other causes which rendered him far from acceptable to the existing ministry. Thus favourable was the crisis to a nearer alliance between the mitre and the crown. Nor should it be forgotten, that the family of the ecclesiastic now raised to the primacy of the English church, possessed considerable influence with a large body of the nobility of the age.¹⁹ A few months only had passed, since the blood of the commons had been freely shed, as the price of their transient ascendancy; and though the king proceeded so far as to submit to his next parliament the propriety of wholly abolishing the service of villanage, and the house of commons declared the late insurrection to be wholly chargeable on the government, almost the only immediate consequence of that convulsion appears to have been, to supply the tyrannical with new facts by which to enforce the usual pleas for oppression.

¹⁹ Barne's Edward the Third, 904. He was fourth son of Hugh Courtney, earl of Devonshire, by Margaret, daughter of Humphry Bohun, earl of Hereford and Essex, by his wife Elizabeth, daughter of Edward the

first. Lewis, c. iv. 58. Gibbon has given an extended notice of the honours which centred in this family, in the eleventh volume of his history, 287—300.

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III.

It is at this moment, so auspicious to their cause, that the English clergy unite in preferring to the sovereign and the court, a series of complaints against the doctrine and practices of the followers of Wycliffe. With a view also to increase the odium so industriously bestowed upon the disciples of the reformer, they were now designated Lollards,²⁰—a name which had long distinguished certain sectaries on the continent, to whom, after the custom of the times, almost every thing degrading had been imputed. The persons in England, who, from this period, were classed with those injured people, are described by the prelates, abbots, and friars, representing the hierarchy, as teaching—that since the time

²⁰ Fox, i. 578. There are few minor points in ecclesiastical history on which a greater diversity of opinion has prevailed, than with respect to the origin of the term Lollard. The subject has received more attention from Mosheim than from any other writer known to me, and his statement is as follows: “As the clergy of this age (the fourteenth century) took little care of the sick and dying, and deserted such as were infected with those pestilential disorders which were then very frequent, some compassionate and pious persons at Antwerp formed themselves into a society for the performance of those religious offices which the sacerdotal orders so shamefully neglected. Pursuant to this agreement, they visited and comforted the sick, assisted the dying with their prayers and exhortations, took care of the interment of those who were cut off by the plague, and on that account forsaken by the affrighted clergy, and committed them to the grave

“with a solemn funeral dirge. It was with reference to this last office, that the common people gave them the name of Lollards. The example of these good people had such an extensive influence, that in a little time societies of the same sort of Lollards, consisting both of men and women, were formed in most parts of Germany and Flanders, and were supported partly by their manual labours, and partly by the charitable donations of pious persons.” Hist. iii. 355—358. But the existence of such societies reflected on the character of the clergy, and impaired the resources of the mendicants; and every art was accordingly resorted to for the purpose of rendering them odious. Such too was the success of these efforts, that the name, though so reputable in its origin, came to be descriptive of all persons who were thought to conceal enormous vices under the appearance of sanctity. See a curious notice from Mosheim on this subject, at the end of the volume. Note B.

of Silvester, there has been no true pope, and that the last to whom that name should be given is the existing pontiff, Urban the sixth; that the power of granting indulgences, and of binding and loosing, as claimed by ecclesiastics, is a delusion, and that those who confide in it are in consequence accursed; that auricular confession is a superfluous service; that the bishop of Rome has no legislative authority in the christian church; that the invocation of saints is an unauthorized custom; that the worship of images or pictures is idolatry, and that the miracles attributed to them are false; that the clergy are bound to reside on their benefices, and not to farm them to others, and that such as fail in these duties should be degraded as wasters of the goods of the church; and, finally, that the pomp of the higher orders of the priesthood should be in all things done away, and their doctrine as to the vanity of the world be enforced by example. Doctrines at all of this character could not have been widely disseminated, without deeply irritating the men to whose pretensions they were so explicitly opposed.

By their present appeal, the clergy obtained the sanction of the king, and of certain lords, to a statute which occurs as the first in our parliamentary history, providing for the punishment of the variable crime designated heresy. For this reason, and as it farther discloses the energy and activity with which Wycliffe's "poor priests" were now prosecuting their plans of reform, it is here inserted without abridgemnt. "Foras-

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III.

Persecuting
statute sur-
reptitiously
obtained by
the clergy.

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“ divers evil persons within the realm going from
“ county to county, and from town to town, in
“ certain habits, under dissimulation of great holi-
“ ness, and without the licence of the ordinaries
“ of the places, or other sufficient authority,
“ preaching daily, not only in churches, and
“ churchyards, but also in markets, fairs, and
“ other open places, where a great congregation
“ of people is, divers sermons, containing heresies,
“ and notorious errors, to the great blemishing
“ of the christian faith, and destruction of the
“ laws and estate of holy-church, to the great
“ peril of the souls of the people, and of all the
“ realm of England, (as more plainly is found,
“ and sufficiently proved, before the reverend
“ father in God, the archbishop of Canterbury,
“ and the bishops and other prelates, masters of
“ divinity, and doctors of canon and of civil law,
“ and a great part of the clergy of the same realm
“ especially assembled for this cause,) which per-
“ sons do also preach divers matters of slander, to
“ engender discord and dissension between divers
“ estates of the said realm, as well spiritual as
“ temporal, in exciting of the people to the great
“ peril of all the realm; which preachers being
“ cited or summoned before the ordinaries of the
“ places, there to answer to that whereof they be
“ impeached, they will not obey to their summons
“ and commandments, nor care for their moni-
“ tions, nor for the censures of holy-church, but
“ expressly despise them; and moreover, by
“ their subtle and ingenious words do draw the
“ people to hear their sermons, and do maintain
“ them in their errors, by strong hand, and by

“ great routs. It is therefore ordained and as-
 “ sented in this present parliament, that the
 “ king’s commissions be made and directed to the
 “ sheriffs, and other ministers of our sovereign lord
 “ the king, or other sufficient persons learned, and
 “ according to the certifications of the prelates
 “ thereof, to be made in the chancery from time
 “ to time, to arrest all such preachers, and also
 “ their fautors, maintainers, and abettors, and to
 “ hold them in arrest and strong prison, till they
 “ will justify themselves according to the law and
 “ reason of holy-church. And the king willeth
 “ and commandeth, that the chancellor make
 “ such commissions at all times, that he, by the
 “ prelates, or any of them, shall be certified, and
 “ thereof required, as is aforesaid.”²¹

By this document, invalid as it was in point of law, much was done toward rendering the magistracy through the kingdom, the passive instruments of that “ holy office ” which the scheme was meant to establish in every diocese. Courtney felt no delicacy in describing himself, as “ chief inquisitor of heretical pravity for the province of Canterbury ; ” and to him, the success of such a plan would, of course, have been singularly grateful. That the suspected through the nation, might be placed under immediate “ arrest, “ and in strong prison,” the force at the command of the sheriffs, was to be subject, in every place, and at every season, to the bidding of the prelates ; and no process instituted was to terminate,

²¹ This document, and those from which the remaining facts of this chapter are mostly derived, may be seen in Fox, 575 — 580. See also Wilkins. Concilia, iii. ubi supra, and Lewis.

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except as the parties accused should “justify themselves according to the law, and the reason, of holy-church.” And if it be remembered, that our statute book had not hitherto included the remotest provision for correcting religious opinions, the matured form in which this oppressive policy was introduced must be viewed as bespeaking no mean confidence of strength on the part of the ruling clergy.

The facts adverted to, are also widely at issue with the theory which transfers the odium of the atrocious persecutions so frequent in ancient Christendom to the temper of the magistrate, or to the maxims which had become incorporated with the policy of princes before the diffusion of the gospel. In the annals of our own country, it is plain that the laity were indebted to the clergy for their first attempt to enforce the doctrines of their religion by the terrors of the dungeon and the stake; and it is not less certain, that the zeal which first taught them to prize the scent of blood, propelled them in the chase.

The attention of the primate, on thus obtaining the aid of the magistrate, was first directed to 1382. Oxford. The synod which had separated on the twenty-first of May, was convened again, in the chamber of the preaching friars, on the twelfth of June; and Robert Rigge, the chancellor of the university, and William Brightwell, a doctor of divinity, appeared at the place of meeting, to answer respecting their late conduct in favour of Hereford and Rippington; and, also, as to their opinion concerning the “aforesaid articles.” Rigge was a zealous advocate of

the university, as an establishment which should be less subject to the control of the ecclesiastical than of the civil power; and hence was strongly opposed to the religious orders, who were concerned that it should be subject to the authority of the primate, as legate of the apostolic see. Our reformer had distinguished himself in the same cause. But while the chancellor certainly admired the character of Wycliffe, it is probable that his admiration did not extend to every tenet which the reformer was known to advocate. Before the synod, indeed, he declared his assent to the judgment passed on the twenty-four articles in the previous meeting; and Brightwell, after some hesitation, was induced to follow his example. As the prospect of successful resistance began to disappear, the courage of both may have been so far subdued as to admit the partial concealment of their opinions. It is certain that a letter was now delivered by the archbishop to “his well beloved son in Christ, the chancellor of Oxford,” requiring him to publish the proscribed articles, in the schools and churches, at the hours of lecturing and preaching; and to give the greater efficacy to this proclamation, it was to be made in Latin, and in the vulgar tongue. In the document containing these instructions, the names of John Wycliffe, Nicholas Hereford, Philip Ripington, John Ashton, and Lawrence Redman, occur as those of persons notoriously suspected of heresy; and adverting to these, and such as should in any way favour their persons or their doctrine, the primate writes, “we suspend the same suspected persons from all scholastic

CHAP. III. “ exercises, until such time as they shall have
 “ purified themselves before us; and we require
 “ that you publicly denounce the same to have
 “ been, and to be, by us suspended; and that you
 “ diligently and faithfully search after all their
 “ patrons and adherents, and cause inquiry to
 “ be made respecting them through every hall in
 “ the said university; and that obtaining intelli-
 “ gence of their names and persons, you do compel
 “ all and each of them to abjure their errors
 “ by ecclesiastical censures, and by any canonical
 “ penalties whatsoever, under pain of the greater
 “ anathema, the which we now denounce against
 “ all and each who shall not be obedient; * * * *
 “ and the absolving of such, as may incur the
 “ sentence of the instrument, we reserve wholly
 “ to ourselves.” But the chancellor had scarcely
 left the place of meeting when the suspicions of
 the primate appear to have been renewed. In a
 letter, dated on the same day with the above, and
 from the same place, he informs Robert Rigge,
 that he had learnt from credible information, and
 partly from experience, his disposition to favour
 “ the aforesaid damnable conclusions,” and his
 intention to molest by his authority, the persons
 who should oppose them in the schools of the
 university. In consequence of this information,
 the archbishop thus writes, “ We admonish thee,
 “ master Robert, chancellor as before named,
 “ the first, second, and third time, and peremp-
 “ torily, that thou dost not grieve, hinder, nor
 “ molest judicially, nor extra-judicially, publicly
 “ nor privately, nor cause to be grieved, hindered
 “ or molested, nor procure indirectly by thyself,

“ or others, to be grieved, the foresaid clerks se-
 “ cular or regular, or such as favour them in the
 “ points determined in their scholastic acts, or in
 “ any other condition whatsoever.” The eccle-
 siastics who had joined with the primate in his
 recent process against the chancellor of Oxford,
 were many of them members of the university.
 On returning to that seminary, the men who had
 lately sat in judgment upon the conduct of its
 principal officer, would be again subject to his
 authority, and it was deemed important to se-
 cure them from that resentment which their
 fears had taught them to anticipate.

The synod which we have seen convoked on
 the nineteenth of May, and re-assembled on the
 twelfth of June, was again convened on the eigh-
 teenth, the twentieth, and the twenty-eighth of
 the same month, and on the first, and twelfth, of^{1382.}
 the month ensuing. In each of these meetings,
 the prosecution of Hereford and his associates was
 continued, but with various success. The ac-
 counts, indeed, which their enemies have trans-
 mitted to us, are not only imperfect, but in many
 things contradictory and improbable; and as these
 form almost our only source of information re-
 specting the accused, their conduct at this period,
 and their real character, are left in a great degree
 uncertain. Wycliffe, who at the time of these
 proceedings, was residing at his rectory, would
 be a close observer of movements, intended to
 annihilate a cause which his life had been devoted
 to create and sustain. In one of his sermons,
 composed during this interval, he clearly refers
 to the measures in progress against Dr. Hereford,

CHAP. and master John Ashton. By the first our re-
III. ——— former appears to have been assisted in his translation of the scriptures; and he is presumed to have been the author of some English pieces, designed to forward the projected reformation of the church. Ashton was known through nearly half the kingdom as an itinerant preacher, and according to the accounts given by his adversaries, was possessed of qualifications which gave an amazing efficiency to his labours. To the doctrines of Wycliffe he is said to have annexed certain novelties of his own. Knighton, who describes his appearing in coarse attire, and with a staff in his hand, as the affectation of simplicity, bears testimony to the assiduity with which he frequented churches, and mingled in family circles, to effect the dissemination of his tenets. The same writer has preserved the outline of two sermons, said to have been delivered by this pedestrian teacher, the one at Leicester, the other at Gloucester. In these we recognize the opinions of our reformer as to the authority of the sovereign in relation to the church, the delusion and abuses of spiritual censures, the pernicious influence of religious temporalities, the unscriptural origin of distinctions among the clergy, and the folly of transubstantiation, together with a special exposure of the malignity which had always characterized crusades—those pernicious fruits of the dispensing power assumed by the priesthood. That neither the learning of Hereford, nor the ardour of Ashton might be any longer employed in diffusing sentiments so hostile to the existing order of things, both were

summoned to appear before the archbishop, who, CHAP.
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to his titles as primate, was pleased to annex the
name of "Chief Inquisitor."²²

It is while this process is pending, that Wycliffe adverts to it in one of his parochial expositions. The persecution he attributes principally to the zeal of Courtney, whom he describes, as the "great bishop of England," and as deeply incensed "because God's law is written in English, "to lewd men."²³ "He pursueth a certain priest," observes the preacher, "because he writeth to "men this English, and summoneth him, and tra-
"veleth him so that it is hard for him to bear it. "And thus he pursueth another priest, by the help
"of pharisees, because he preacheth Christ's gos-
"pel freely, and without fables. Oh! men who
"are on Christ's behalf, help ye now against Anti-
"christ, for the perilous times are come which
"Christ and Paul foretold!"²⁴ We can believe that Wycliffe's auditory would not fail to sympathize with their pastor at this foreboding moment; but according to the statements of their persecutors, the efforts made by the men who were thus feelingly adverted to, in the hope of escaping from the strong hand of their oppressors, were fruitless.

It should be remembered, however, that when authority was once appealed to, with a view to suppress the doctrine of Wycliffe, it became a point of some importance that the end proposed should, at least, *seem* to have been obtained. Hereford and Rippington, after repeated struggles to evade

²² Knighton, 2655—2660. Wilkins. ²³ "Laymen." ²⁴ MS. Hom. Bib. Reg.

CHAP.
III. — any confession of their faith, are described as at length admitting the twenty-four conclusions censured by the synod, to be, with certain explanations, partly heretical and partly false. They are said also to have stated, that in no instance had they publicly avowed the tenets which in those articles were imputed to them. Their confession, however, such as it was, proved so little satisfactory, that each member of the synod declared it to be, with respect to numerous articles, “heretical, subtle, erroneous, and perverse.” But all farther explanation of their creed was steadily refused, and for a while the terrors of excommunication were braved, though its sentence, that it might operate as a warning to the infected, was pronounced with studious pomp and publicity. Ashton conducted his defence with considerable spirit, but affirmed that he should decline answering the questions of his judges on the conclusions adduced. He was repeatedly urged to make his communications to the court in Latin, that no erroneous impression might be produced on the mind of the laity who were auditors; but the consciousness of a bad cause, and the spirit of domination which this unauthorized injunction betrayed, roused the indignation of the prisoner, and called forth an appeal to the people in their own tongue, which the archbishop deemed it important to check, by hastening the business of the day to its close. In the sentence delivered, the silence of the suspected person was regarded as the proof of guilt, and he was exposed accordingly to all the consequences of holding the censured articles.

Could we always submit to the authority of CHAP.
III.
Knighton, we should believe that Hereford and Ashton delivered written confessions to the synod on the doctrine of the eucharist, and such as contained every mystery which the priesthood had connected with it. But there is room to suspect that these papers belong to that numerous class of productions which owe their origin to pious fraud. Were they authentic, we should not have had to search in vain for them in the Courtney register, where so large a space is devoted to these proceedings. In addition to which, Ashton is made to affirm in this document, that he had never questioned the tenet of transubstantiation—a statement which, according to the historian who has adopted it, was contrary to fact, and one which must have contained a falsehood for which no motive can be assigned. And had Hereford descended to employ the language attributed to him on the same article, the rest in the series would doubtless have been disposed of in the same manner, and his escape could hardly then have been attributed, purely to the interference of the duke of Lancaster. It appears, however, that Rippington ultimately conformed to the requisitions of the church, and that after a time he endeavoured to place his orthodoxy beyond suspicion by persecuting his old associates. The dispute with Ashton, also, was subsequently so far accommodated as to admit of his returning to his scholastic exercises. But in 1387, Hereford was generally believed to be a disciple of Wycliffe; and so late as the year 1392, he solicited and obtained the protection of the court against the

CHAP. machinations of his enemies which had arisen
 III. from that cause.²⁵

²⁵ It is from Knighton, (2657) that we learn the fact of Hereford's "escape from the bitterness of death" through the influence of the duke of Lancaster. But in 1391 we find him with the clergy who sat in judgment on the celebrated Lollard, Walter Brute. By his indecision he appears to have forfeited the confidence both of the orthodox and of their opponents, and probably his own peace of mind. The firmness of the martyr

is not the possession of every good man. Fox, i. 654. Mr. Godwin describes him as "the most refined and virtuous of the adherents of "Wycliffe." It may be that the Lollards did not possess his superior as a scholar, but in the virtues of firmness and consistency he was surpassed by many of that class. Life of Chaucer, ii. 336. Ashton is said to have died as he lived. Thorp's Examination. Wals. 328. Lewis, c. x.

CHAPTER IV.

PERSECUTION.—WYCLIFFE'S DEVOTIONAL ALLUSION TO THE EVILS OF HIS TIME.—SUMMARY OF HIS COMPLAINT ADDRESSED TO THE KING AND PARLIAMENT.—EFFECT OF THAT APPEAL.—THE REFORMER IS FORSAKEN BY LANCASTER.—HIS PURPOSES UNALTERED BY THAT EVENT.—HIS VIGOROUS PERCEPTION OF THE BEARINGS OF THE CONTROVERSY RESPECTING THE EUCHARIST, AND HIS CONFIDENCE OF ULTIMATE SUCCESS.—HE APPEARS BEFORE THE CONVOCATION AT OXFORD.—SUBSTANCE OF HIS CONFESSION.—PERPLEXITY OF HIS JUDGES.—HE RETIRES TO LUTTERWORTH. — HIS LETTER TO THE PONTIFF.

THE history of persecution affords abundant CHAP. evidence of its general inefficacy, and of its tur- IV. pitude. That it should have pervaded the nations of Christendom so entirely, and through so long a period, is in every view humiliating. The civil penalties by which the religious obedience of the ancient Israelite was enforced, are sufficiently explained by the fact that such was the nature of the Hebrew government, that to yield to the practice of idolatry, was to incur the guilt of treason. But no second theocracy has been established. The power, accordingly, both of the sovereign and of the priest, may be presumed to have been materially affected by the departure of the Mosaic economy. The limits now assigned to the authority of each, is a subject requiring the most deliberate attention, whether viewed in connexion with the many questions which it involves, or in its practical importance. The consequences resulting

Persecu-
tion.

CHAP. from opposite decisions concerning it, have ever
IV. ——— been fraught with a large amount of good or evil
to mankind.

Among the heathen states of antiquity, toleration was scarcely a virtue, as the local aspect of their idolatry left the province of every existing deity undisturbed, even while new objects of worship were introduced. But the gospel was not of a character to enter into any such partnership with human inventions. On the contrary, as being alone true, it claimed an undivided empire. By its first disciples, its pretensions in this respect were fearlessly urged; nor were their nearer descendants concerned, either to deny or to conceal this peculiarity of their faith, though but too well apprised of the loathing which it had brought upon them from all the votaries of Gentile worship. In some instances, that contempt of the pomp and pleasure of the world which not unfrequently distinguished the professors of christianity in those ages, was increased and purified by the external sufferings thus incurred. But in others, the turbulence of the passions was less subdued by the better spirit of the gospel, and the violence employed to suppress the doctrines of the cross sometimes excited a re-action of the same evil temper in their support. These inflammable materials had been for some time increasing in the church, when, under Constantine, christianity was recognized as the religion of the empire. As the consequence of that event, these dangerous elements became so far dominant among the nominal professors of the gospel, as to leave the partisans of the ancient idolatry to deplore the

severity of weapons which they had recently wielded with so much freedom against its opponents. But when attempts to convince the understanding of its errors, by means of confiscations, and torture, and exile, were not only considered as rational, but when to be zealous in the application of this species of logic, was to secure, moreover, the reputation of unusual sanctity, it was not the grosser forms of heathenism merely, which would feel the disastrous influence of this strange delusion. The diversities of opinion observable among the avowed disciples of the same Master, soon attracted the critical attention of churchmen. These differences were found to be retained with much tenacity, and the obstinacy of the weak provoked the indignation of the strong. No little artifice was, in consequence, employed, to clothe the doctrine of dissentients with almost every feature of impiety—as the best method of vindicating the infliction of penalties upon them which had once been the award of idolatry. Nor is it to be doubted, that the guilt of transferring the maxims of persecution, from the policy of pagan Rome to that of the papal hierarchy, so as to render them the law both of its head and of its members, belongs, chiefly, to the higher orders of the clergy. Amid the declining civilization of the empire, the power of that class of men steadily increased, until their supremacy over the conscience of their victims was completed. It is, however, a stubborn and a melancholy fact, that with every step of their progress persecution became more systematic and relentless. The notion of divine right was by degrees connected with the regal office,

CHAP.
IV.

and while monarchs, if obedient to the will of the church, were placed on a level with the sovereigns of Judah, ecclesiastics claimed to be the representatives of Deity, and to an extent greatly surpassing any thing to which the Jewish priesthood had aspired. The ministers of the christian sanctuary being once acknowledged as the unerring interpreters of the will of Heaven, to dissent from the church, whether its judgment were interposed to enforce the claims of princes, or to determine articles of faith, was to resist the Almighty, and to fall under the double censure of the rebel and the impious. Monarchs, indeed, were sometimes slow to act on the suggestions of their pastors, as to the best mode of subduing the heresies of their people; but such as were solicitous of repose, or concerned to hold the sceptre with a steady hand, were generally induced to become the instruments of almost any scheme, which promised to the church the reverence claimed for her supposed infallibility.

It is true the civil authorities of England, previous to the age of Wycliffe, are less stained with the blood which was so freely shed for the protection of orthodoxy than were the rulers of almost every state upon the continent. But this arose simply from the circumstance, that until the former half of the fourteenth century had passed, certain encroachments in discipline formed the only matters of serious complaint. The honour of first attempting to render it a part of our statute law, that on all questions of heresy the magistrate should become the executioner of the will of the church, belongs to the zeal of the

primate Courtney. Nor was the effort wholly futile, though its immediate result was trivial when compared with its design. The degree of success, however, which attended this claim on the secular power, served as a precedent and a motive in the series of measures which were ere long to involve both the church and the state in all the odious consequences generally attendant on a coercive warfare with religious opinion. Wycliffe marked this tendency of events, and by his benevolent genius the progress of intolerance was for a while impeded. His declining health, or the fear, perhaps, of encountering the political influence of Lancaster, proved the security of the reformer during the late prosecution of his friends. It is stated, indeed, that Hereford and Rippington, when falling before the strength of their antagonists, solicited the protection of John of Gaunt, and that the reply of that nobleman consisted of instructions respecting the duty of submitting, in all such matters, to the decision of their ordinaries. That such an appeal was made, and that such was its result is perhaps true, but that it did not include the name of Wycliffe, may be safely inferred from his confidence in the "noble duke," as expressed in the petition which he presented immediately afterwards to the king and the parliament.

It appears, also, from a discourse composed by the reformer, about this period, that he was not ignorant of the artifice and corruption to which his adversaries had resorted, in the hope of opposing the force of the civil government to the intended reformation of religion. Commenting

CHAP.
IV.

Wycliffe's
devotional
allusion to
the evils
of the day.

CHAP.
IV.

on the entombment of Christ, and on the vain effort of the priests and the soldiers to prevent his resurrection, the preacher adverts to the measures recently adopted, both by the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, with a view to consign the gospel to oblivion. “Thus,” he observes, “do our high priests, and our new religious fear them, lest God’s law, after all they have done, should be quickened. Therefore make they statutes stable as a rock, and they obtain grace of knights to confirm them, and this they well mark with the witness of lords; and all lest the truth of God’s law, hid in the sepulchre, should break out to the knowing of the common people. Oh! Christ, thy law is hidden thus, when wilt thou send thine angel to remove the stone, and show thy truth unto thy flock? Well I know that knights have taken gold in this case, to help that thy law may be thus hid, and thine ordinances consumed. But well I know that at the day of doom it shall be manifest, and even before, when thou arisest against all thine enemies!”¹

While such was the policy of the leading members of the hierarchy, it was obvious to Wycliffe, that nothing remained but to submit to their despotism, or to attempt a counteraction of their efforts as made to obtain the sanction of the court and the senate. Nearly sixty winters had now passed over the head of our reformer, and sickness had made a serious inroad on his physical strength—that important auxiliary of intellectual vigour and prowess. But his furrowed brow, and

¹ MS. Hom. Bib. Reg.

whitened hairs, were still allied to an energy CHAP.
IV.
which could ill submit to a tame surrendering of —
the fortress of equity, and truth, and godliness. Each step in the progress of the late persecutions, was seen as facilitating the meditated blow against himself. Should it be his lot to perish beneath the fangs of the rising tyranny, it was his resolve that his countrymen should not be ignorant of the opinions for which he suffered. In conformity with this determination, and with his message to the chancellor of Oxford some months previously, he presented a summary of the more important of his tenets, in the form of a petition, to the king and the parliament. The assembly to which this appeal was addressed, was summoned on the fifteenth of October, and met on the nineteenth of November,² and in this document it is supposed to be already convened. It appears also to have been known that in this meeting of “the great
“men of the realm, both seculars and men of
“holy-church,” the articles included in this appeal would become the matters of discussion. The doctrine thus submitted to their judgment, is said to be “proved both by authority and
“reason,” and this that the “christian religion
“may be increased, maintained, and made stable,
“since our Lord Jesus Christ, very God and very
“man, is head and prelate of this religion, and
“shed his precious heart’s blood, and water out
“of his side, on the cross, to make this religion
“perfect and stable, and clean without error.”³

1382.
November.

² Fox. Acts, &c.

³ MS. Ad regem et parlamentum,
C. C. C. Cambridge, and in the Cotton

Library. It will be remembered as
one of the two works printed by Dr.
James in 1608.

CHAP.
IV.

Summary of
Wycliffe's
"Com-
plaint."

The articles thus introduced are four in number. The first relates to the vows of the religious, declaring them to be a device of man, and of no obligation: the second asserts that "secular lords may lawfully, and meritoriously, in many cases, take away temporal goods given to men of the church." In the third it is affirmed that even tythes, and other voluntary offerings, should be withdrawn "from prelates, or other priests who ever they be," on their yielding to "great sins, as pride, simony, and man-slaying, gluttony, drunkenness, and lechery." In the last, the reformer prays that the doctrine of the eucharist, "which is plainly taught by Christ and his apostles in the gospels, and epistles, might be also openly taught in the churches."

Nearly half this paper is occupied in demonstrating the first of these positions; and to discern the propriety of this, it should be remembered, that the archbishop derived his most efficient aid in his present arbitrary measures, from the begging fraternities and the monks. It has appeared that the sentence which excluded every teacher of Wycliffe's doctrine concerning the eucharist from the university, was the effect of their influence; and in the synod which had since prosecuted his disciples, with all possible severity, the same order of men prevailed. It became important, therefore, in the judgment of the reformer, to shew distinctly that so far from meriting the pre-eminence conceded to them, the vows which gave to these persons their distinction were a human invention; an invention also of comparatively recent date; and injurious, in

various ways, to religion, and to the interests of society. CHAP.
IV.

In this memorable appeal, these points are fully proved. The writer especially adverts to the practice of the religious in forsaking one rule, deemed less perfect, to embrace another regarded as of higher sanctity. The rule of Christ, it is contended, must of necessity be the most complete, and it is thence inferred that all men should be held free from any painful consequences in relinquishing any "private sect," the contrivance of "sinful men," for the rule of the gospel. This, it is justly observed, should be the more readily admitted by the parties alluded to, as they were not slow to forget their vows of poverty and seclusion, when the attractions of a mitre were allowed to descend upon them. The change, also, which followed in such cases, is described as partaking less of an increased separation from the world, than of an actual return to it. If to all this, it should be replied, that the customs of the religious are not at variance with the institute of the Saviour and his apostles, but rather parts of it; the persons so reasoning, are called upon to name the portion of holy writ, containing the articles of discipline which have given existence to canons, and monks, and mendicants; and to expose the failure which must be attendant on the attempt to do this, various of the regulations adopted by these communities are specified. Respecting this moiety of the work, in which that momentous doctrine, the sufficiency of scripture, is maintained in the most satisfactory terms, a correct idea may be formed from the following

CHAP. extract. It is intended to exhibit the supreme
IV. authority of the inspired writings, and clearly assumes the right of private judgment. “ Inasmuch
“ as one patron or founder is more perfect, more
“ mighty, more wise, more holy, and in more
“ charity than another, insomuch is the first
“ patron’s rule better and more perfect than is
“ that of the second. But Jesus Christ, the
“ patron of the christian religion, given to the
“ apostles, passeth without measure, in might,
“ and wisdom, and good-will, the perfection of
“ every patron of any private sect—his rule is
“ therefore more perfect. Also that Christ’s pure
“ religion, without the addition of sinful men’s
“ errors, is the most perfect of all, may be thus
“ shewn. For either Christ might give such a
“ rule, the most perfect to be kept in this life,
“ and would not; and then he was envious—as
“ St. Austin proveth in other matters—or else
“ Christ would ordain such a rule, and might not;
“ and then Christ was unmighty, but to affirm
“ that of Christ is heresy—or else he might and
“ could, but would not; and then he was unwise,
“ and that is a heresy no man should consent to
“ hear. Therefore, it is plain, that Christ both
“ might, and could, and would ordain a rule the
“ most perfect that should be kept in this life.
“ And so Christ, of his endless wisdom and charity,
“ has ordained such a rule. And thus on
“ each side men are bound, upon pain of heresy,
“ and of blasphemy, and of condemnation, to
“ believe and acknowledge that the religion of
“ Jesus Christ to his apostles, and kept by them
“ in its own freedom, without addition from sinful

“man’s error, is the most perfect of all; and so to
“hinder no man from forsaking a private religion,
“and keeping the pure religion of Christ.”

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IV.
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These reasonings are also enforced by the fact, that in the early ages, when neither monks nor friars were known, “the church increased and
“prospered most, for then almost all men disposed
“themselves to martyrdom after the example
“of Christ.” His conclusion therefore is, that “it
“were not only meritorious to the church now,
“but most meritorious, to live so in all things,
“and by all things.” As the consequence of these opinions with regard to the gospel, and its Author, Wycliffe claimed for himself, and others, the same liberty in adhering to the simple order said to be instituted by the Redeemer, which was conceded to such as professed to adopt some one system of man’s invention in preference to others. And had the religious been disposed to tolerate this exclusive attachment to scriptural vows of spirituality or seclusion, their own authority might have been less disturbed, and of longer continuance. But they saw this kind of profession as reflecting on every other, regarding them as innovations of yesterday, and as opposed to the veneration due to the Redeemer, who in opposition to the infallibility assumed by the church, was declared to be alone above the influence of error. Hence arose the spirit of persecution, and hence the reaction which violence rarely fails to produce.

In the second of the articles contained in this paper, the reformer combats the theory of certain friars, who had maintained on some recent and

CHAP.
IV.
—

public occasion, that both the persons and the property of the clergy, and of the religious, were strictly beyond the jurisdiction of the sovereign. The absurdity of this fashionable doctrine the reformer had often exposed, and it is again exhibited, and principally by tracing it to its results. It is remarked that if to hold the opposite of this doctrine, “be error touching the health “of man’s soul,” then the race of English princes, and the men who have formed the successive councils of the realm, must be viewed as among the lost. And, not to dwell on the recorded opinions of such parties, as opposed to this tenet, nor on the measures which frequently arose from them, it is observed, that if they were in error in this matter, it must then follow that should “an “abbot and all his convent prove open traitors, “conspiring the death of the king and the queen, “and of other lords, and exert themselves to “destroy the whole realm, the king may not take “from them one halfpenny, or farthing, nor its “worth, since all these are temporal goods. Also, “though other clerks should send to our enemies “all the rents which they have in our land, and “whatever they may rob or steal of the king’s “liege men, yet our king may not punish them “by one farthing, nor farthing’s worth. Also, by “this doctrine of friars, though monks or friars, “or other clerks, whatever they be, should slay “lords’ tenants, the king’s liege men, and dishonour lords’ wives, yea, the queen, which God “forbid, or the empress, yet the king may not “punish them by the loss of one farthing. Also, “it followeth plainly, that men called men of

“ holy-church may dwell in this land at their CHAP.
 “ liking, and do what kind of sin, and what kind IV.
 “ of treason they like, and the king, nevertheless, ———
 “ may not punish them, neither in their temporal
 “ goods, nor in their bodies, since if he may not
 “ punish them in the less, he may not in the
 “ greater. And should they make one of them-
 “ selves king, no secular lord may hinder him in
 “ conquering all the secular lordships of this
 “ earth: and these men might destroy all lords
 “ and ladies, and their blood and affinity, without
 “ any penalty arising in this life, either in their
 “ body or estate. Ye lords! then see and under-
 “ stand, with what punishing they deserve to be
 “ punished, who thus hastily and wrongfully have
 “ condemned you for heretics, forasmuch as you
 “ do execution and righteousness according to
 “ God’s law and man’s. For the chief lordship
 “ of all temporalities in this land, both of secular
 “ men and religious, pertains to the king, of his
 “ general governing, or else he were not king of
 “ all England, but merely of a little part thereof.”
 This refutation of the ambitious tenet to which
 this part of the petition refers, is farther strength-
 ened by the language of St. Paul, respecting
 magistracy, as “ God’s ordinance;” and it is
 remarked, that the apostle, who “ putteth all men
 “ in subjection to kings, out taketh never a one.”
 From these premises, the known doctrine of our
 reformer concerning the power of the crown, as
 extending over the whole property of the clergy,
 and over the persons of that order in all civil
 affairs, is in conclusion adduced.

The third article relates to the application of

CHAP. IV. “tythes and offerings,” as required “by God’s
——— “law, and the pope’s law.” In this the claims of the most devoted among the clergy, are limited to the needful matters of food and clothing; while the ignorant, the indolent, or the vicious, are described as having forfeited all right to any part in the goods of the church. In support of this doctrine, the writer appeals to the conduct of Tobit, in withholding his offerings from the priests of Jeroboam, and rendering them to the true descendants of Aaron, who resided at Jerusalem; to the story of Eli and his sons; and to the advice of Paul in his letters to Timothy. From the authorities of a subsequent date, the names of Jerome, Augustine, and of Gregory the great, are cited, together with those of Bernard and Grossteste, all as more or less favourable to the position advanced. Two things are said, in conclusion, to follow from what is thus introduced. First, that if curates do not their office in word and example as God has commanded, their people are under no obligation to pay them tythes and offerings, since the end for which such payments are made is wanting: secondly, that curates are more guilty in withholding their teaching by word and example, than their parishioners would be in refusing tythes and offerings, even though the office of the curate were well performed. It is true, that to withhold these contributions, in such a case, is frequently described as a neglect of duty; but Wycliffe does not hesitate to affirm the latter delinquency, serious as it may be, to be far less so than the former.

The last article of this complaint, we have

noticed as relating to the doctrine of the eucharist. CHAP.
IV.
The reformer claims it as a right to publish freely ——— the scripture representations of that sacrament, but he abstains from any statement of his peculiar views respecting it, which were indeed sufficiently known, and adverts chiefly to the evils arising from “the worldly business of priests.”

His manner of concluding the portion of this work which relates to tythes and offerings, is expressive of that sense of justice, humanity, and religion, which sustained the mind of the writer, while called to witness the growing strength of the enemies of reform. “Ah! Lord God,” he exclaims, “can it be reason, to constrain the poor
“ people to provide a worldly priest, sometimes
“ unable both of life and knowledge, in his pomp
“ and pride, covetousness and envy, gluttony, drunkenness, and lechery, in simony and heresy,—
“ with a fine horse, and gay saddles, and bridles
“ ringing by the way, and himself in costly clothes,
“ and fine furs—and to suffer their wives and
“ children, and poor neighbours to perish from
“ hunger, thirst, and cold, and other mischiefs
“ of the world! Ah! Lord Jesus Christ! since
“ within a few years, men paid their tythes and
“ offerings of their own free will, to good men,
“ and able to conduct the great worship of God,
“ to the profit and beauty of the holy church
“ fighting on the earth; can it be needful or lawful
“ that a worldly priest should destroy this holy
“ and approved custom, constraining men to
“ forsake this freedom, and turning tythes and
“ offerings to wicked uses, or at least to those

CHAP. "which are not so good as was the custom
IV. "before?"

Effect of
this appeal.

The impression made on the parliament by this appeal was considerable, and to Wycliffe must have been highly gratifying. In a petition to the king, the members of the commons cited those provisions of the spurious statute obtained by the primate, which, to effect the imprisonment of the new preachers, and their abettors, until obedient to the church, had rendered every sheriff in the kingdom the tool of his diocesan, requiring him to root out the errors by the sword entrusted to him, which neither the persuasions nor the terrors of an infallible church had been sufficient to destroy. But as this pretended law "was never agreed to "nor granted by the commons, but whatsoever "was moved therein was without their assent," it is required "that the said statute be disannulled," and it is farther declared to be "in no "wise their meaning, that either themselves, or "such as shall succeed them, shall be farther "bound to the prelates, than were their ancestors "in former times."⁴

But to procure the enactment or the repeal of statutes, however formally either might be done, was but a minor part of the labour which devolved on our parliaments in those ages. Nothing, indeed, was more common, than the violation of promises, and even of oaths, on the part of the sovereign, or of the government; and to justify this bad faith, the secret, or avowed pretext generally was, that the concessions made had been improperly extorted. Hence to secure

⁴ Fox. Acts and Monuments, i. 576. Lingard, iv. 259.

the enforcement of laws, was commonly a work of much greater difficulty, than to effect their apparent adoption. From this disgraceful circumstance, arose the custom of so frequently confirming anew the most acknowledged principles of the constitution. Nor is it at all doubtful, that to this state of things, as pervading the cabinets of Europe, the court of Rome had greatly contributed, as well by her general policy, as by the most flagrant abuses of her dispensing power. With the papal maxims, the present archbishop of Canterbury was thoroughly imbued, and to him we may attribute the exclusion of this act of repeal, so honourable to its authors, from the parliamentary records; and also the subsequent conduct of the young king, by which his message to the commons, in reply to their petition, was virtually falsified. CHAP.
IV.

In his letters, Richard had been made to threaten the penalties of exclusion from the university, imprisonment, and confiscation, against all who should hold the doctrine of Wycliffe, or such as should in any way favour its abettors. And though the monarch subsequently declared himself pleased with the repeal of the statute on which these instructions were founded, the violent measures which it had been framed to sanction were still pursued, and with but too much success. It was, as we have remarked, on the 19th of November, that the parliament and the convocation assembled at Oxford. The clergy there convened, were informed by the primate, that the business before them was to grant a subsidy to the crown; and to remedy certain disorders which

CHAP. had too long disgraced the university, and were
 IV. extending rapidly to the whole community, of
 whose spiritual safety they were the properly
 constituted guardians. In this meeting the arch-
 bishop had concentrated his whole strength, and
 the rector of Lutterworth was now summoned to
 answer before him on the articles which were
 regarded as containing his opinions. There were
 circumstances, however, which served greatly to
 narrow the field of discussion on this occasion.
 On all the more important questions of ecclesi-
 astical polity, Wycliffe had spoken freely, in his
 various writings, and in his address to “the
 “secular lords and men of holy church” who
 were now met. But the resentment of the com-
 mons, which the meditated encroachment of the
 prelates had excited, was not to be overlooked,
 and it appears to have suggested the utmost cau-
 tion in the method of proceeding at this juncture.
 It was not difficult to perceive, that matters of
 discipline, as less important, and less protected
 by the supposed infallibility of the church, might
 form but an inefficient ground of accusation; and
 as the doctrine of the eucharist was an acknow-
 ledged article of faith, and one also of the gravest
 moment, the faith of the reformer with respect to
 that sacrament became the subject of special in-
 quisition. Lancaster, who appears to have been
 concerned, at this crisis, to avoid any renewal of
 hostilities with the clergy, is said to have advised
 his submission in all doctrinal matters to the judg-
 ment of his order.⁵ But Wycliffe, though sen-

He is for-
 saken by
 Lancaster.

⁵ In the Sudbury Register, (Wil-
 kins, iii. 171.) the duke is highly com-

mended for his conduct in this in-
 stance.

sible of the aid which he had derived from the patronage of that illustrious nobleman, had advanced to a point from which there was no receding, except at the cost of consistency and truth. The state of affairs, at this moment, presented a powerful test to the integrity and energy of his character; and the result has served to place him among the most distinguished of confessors. To have denied his doctrine on the eucharist, -- or simply to have abstained from teaching it, would have been to continue sheltered from the resentment of the clergy, by the power of one who was still the second man in the kingdom. To proceed in exposing the weakness and impiety of the received opinions on that sacrament, and this in opposition to the serious admonitions of John of Gaunt, was deliberately to encounter the unbridled malevolence of his enemies. The latter course, however, costly as it might prove, was the object of his choice. We also learn, and from a writer who was not a little solicitous to fasten the disgrace of equivocation upon the name of Wycliffe, that the command of the duke, in this particular, affected his purposes in no degree more than the injunctions of the primate. And it is added by the same authority, that in his public defence on the sacrament of the altar, "like an obstinate heretic, he refuted all the doctors of the second millenary."⁶

CHAP.
IV.
His purposes unaltered by that event.

To understand the zeal with which the reformer assailed the errors of transubstantiation, we must bear in mind the views which he had adopted concerning it. The adoration of a piece

⁶ Walsingham, Hist. 283.

CHAP. VI. of bread in the place of the Deity, was, in his judgment, idolatry. The conduct of the priest, also, in pretending to re-make his Maker, he vehemently pronounced to be the last step of presumption and blasphemy. Nor was this all; for in a treatise published soon after this period, and which, from its extent and its character, we may presume to have been already in a great degree composed, he attacks the orthodox mysteries connected with the eucharist, from a most luminous perception of their general bearing. So long as these are received in the church, their tendency, he affirms, must be to facilitate the introduction of any dogma serving to elevate the priesthood, however much opposed to scripture, to reason, or to the senses. The doctrine of a real presence, he declares to be the offspring of Satan; and the author of evil is viewed, while inventing it, as reasoning thus with himself. “Should I once
 “so far beguile the faithful of the church, by the
 “aid of Antichrist, my vicegerent, as to persuade
 “them to deny that this sacrament is bread, and
 “to induce them to regard it as merely an accident, there will be nothing then which I may
 “not bring them to receive, since there can be
 “nothing more opposite to the scriptures, or to
 “common discernment. Let the life of a prelate
 “then be what it may, let him be guilty of luxury,
 “simony, or murder, the people may be led to
 “believe that he is really no such man—nay, they
 “may then be persuaded to admit, that the pope
 “is infallible, at least with respect to the matters
 “of christian faith; and that, inasmuch as he is
 “known by the name of Most Holy Father, he is

His views of
 the bearing
 of this controversy.

“ of course free from sin.”⁷ Thus it appeared to Wycliffe, that while the authority of the church was so far submitted to, as to involve the adoption of this marvellous dogma, no limit could possibly be assigned to the schemes of clerical imposture and oppression. He sought its overthrow accordingly, as being false in itself; and still more as being the parent, directly or indirectly, of innumerable falsehoods. His attack, therefore, upon transubstantiation, was evidently conducted with a view to the general freedom of the human mind.

Nor was the reformer without that stimulus in the present unequal contest, which arises from the confidence of success. In an earlier chapter of the treatise last cited, he exclaims, “ Oh ! that
 “ all who believe could see how Antichrist and his
 “ instruments condemn the sons of the church,
 “ and persecute them even to death, because they
 “ maintain this truth as taught in the gospel.
 “ Truly aware I am, that the doctrine of the gos-
 “ pel may for a season be trampled under foot,
 “ that it may be overpowered in high places, and
 “ even suppressed by the threatenings of Anti-
 “ christ; but equally sure I am, that it shall never
 “ be extinguished, for it is the recording of truth
 “ itself, ‘ Heaven and earth shall pass away, but
 “ so shall not my words.’ Let the spirit of the
 “ faithful therefore awake itself, and diligently
 “ enquire as to the nature of this venerable sacra-
 “ ment, whether it be not indeed bread, as the
 “ gospel, the senses, and reason assure us. Cer-
 “ tain, verily, I am, that the idolaters who make

His confi-
dence of
ultimate
success.

⁷ Trialogus, lib. iv. c. 7. The substance of this passage occurs in the

MS. Contra Fratres, Bibl. Bodl. Archi. A. 83.

CHAP. IV. “to themselves gods, are not ignorant of the real
 ——— “nature of these gods — though they pretend
 “there is a something of deity within them,
 “which is communicated, as by the God of gods.”
 To believe this, he remarks, is to sink in the scale
 of perception beneath the pagan or the brute;
 and from what he had written, the conclusion is
 said to follow, “that this venerable sacrament is
 “naturally bread, and sacramentally, the body
 “of Christ.”⁸

His appear-
 ance before
 the convoca-
 tion at Ox-
 ford.

But to return to the proceedings of the con-
 vocation at Oxford. The assembly on which it
 devolved to ascertain the opinions of Wycliffe,
 and to determine their character, consisted of the
 archbishop of Canterbury, the bishops of Lincoln,
 Norwich, Worcester, London, Salisbury, and
 Hereford, with a numerous selection of doctors,
 together with the chancellor of the university,
 and many of the inferior clergy. Around these
 also, the laity were crowded as auditors, variously
 interested in the object of the meeting. Before
 this imposing array of authority and learning,
 and all marshalled against him, stood the rector
 of Lutterworth. More than forty years had now
 elapsed, since Oxford had first become his resi-
 dence, and a place associated in his mind with
 many pleasing recollections or pursuits. Through
 that long period it had been more or less his
 home. Before him it stood, a venerable esta-
 blishment, formed to nurse the intellect of his
 country, in subservience to the great designs of
 patriotism, philanthropy, and religion. Hence he
 had always been among the foremost to defend

⁸ Trialogus, lib. iv. c. 4.

its jurisdiction as independent of all foreign control, and especially of that which proceeded from the papacy. He was now grey with age, or rather, perhaps, as the effect of those religious solitudes, and that mental activity, which appear always to have surpassed the ability of his feeble nature, and to have been constantly exposing him to the inroads of disease. The place, also, in which he now appeared, under so much serious accusation, and upon such unequal terms, had frequently echoed to the utterance of his praise by admiring converts, and, to the sound of his voice, as the advocate of doctrines endeared to the purer ages of the church. Nor is it to be supposed that his numerous followers had become suddenly extinct. But at this moment, the partizans of the established superstitions had so far diffused the terrors of their strength, that the reformer, like another Elijah, stands apparently alone amid a generation of his countrymen. Still, while certain affecting recollections were doubtless fresh within him, and while his present circumstances were quite alarming enough to have shaken even an extraordinary mind, such was his conviction of the goodness of his cause, that his firmness continues unbroken.

His defence, we have seen, was such as to extort from adversaries the praise of an unrivalled acuteness. And his written confessions, which the same adversaries have transmitted to us, contain the most distinct announcements of whatever he had previously taught on the sacrament to which they relate. That two confessions referring to this article should be

CHAP.
IV.
—

attributed to him, will be in part explained by observing, that the one is in Latin, the other in English. In addition to which, the first treats the question in a style which the more learned of his judges must have seen to be adapted to their taste, simply for the purpose of defeating them with their own weapons; while the English document touches but distantly on the distinctions of the schools, and is framed to meet the popular apprehension. It was not unusual to exact confessions from suspected persons in this double form; and had those of Wycliffe contained any recantation, both would have been publicly read in the schools of the university, and from the pulpits of the clergy. In this manner the twenty-four articles had been published, which were condemned some months previously by the synod at the preaching friars.

Substance
of his con-
fession.

In his Latin confession,⁹ Wycliffe applies himself to demonstrate, and in the dialect of the schools, “that this venerable sacrament is *naturally* bread and wine, but *sacramentally* the body “and blood of Christ.” With a view to this object, he observes, that there are six modes of existing that may be attributed to the body of the Saviour; and that three of these may be affirmed of that body as it is present in the eucharist; and three of its state as peculiar to the heavenly world. In the eucharist, he is virtually, spiritually, and sacramentally present, but his substantial, his corporeal, and his dimensional presence, is declared to pertain exclusively to his mode of being in the celestial state. The

⁹ See it in the Appendix, No. VI.

reformer then repeats the doctrine maintained by himself and his followers; denies the charge of their adoring the elements of bread and wine; and observes that he had detected the fallacies of his opponents, who, in citing the language of the fathers on this sacrament, were always disposed to confound the notion of a sacramental, with that of an identical presence. The result of this mistake is affirmed to be, the insane fiction of an accident, or quality, without a subject,—a tenet declared to be equally insulting to the church, and injurious to God. CHAP.
IV.

The English confession, if we discard its orthography, and something of its obsolete expression, will state his judgment on this important article more distinctly than any abridgment in other language. “We believe,” he writes, “as
“ Christ and his apostles have taught us, that the
“ sacrament of the altar, white and round, and
“ like to our bread or host unconsecrated, is verily
“ God’s body in the form of bread; and if it be
“ broken into three parts, as is the custom of the
“ church, or into a thousand, every one of these
“ parts is in the same sense God’s body. And
“ just as the person of Christ is very God, and
“ very man, so the church through many hun-
“ dred winters hath believed the same sacrament
“ to be very God’s body, and very bread, since
“ it is the form of God’s body, and the form of
“ bread, as Christ and his apostles taught.
“ Hence, St. Paul nameth it never without call-
“ ing it bread, and he, according to our belief,
“ obtained his knowledge in this matter from God.
“ And the arguments of heretics against this

CHAP. “ doctrine, a christian man may easily answer. For
IV. — “ just as it is heresy to believe that Christ is a
“ spirit and no body, so is it heresy to suppose
“ that this sacrament is God’s body and no bread,
“ for it is both together. But the greatest heresy
“ which God has suffered to come to his church,
“ is to suppose that this sacrament is an acci-
“ dent, or a mere quality without a substance,
“ and may in no sense be God’s body; for
“ Christ himself, as witnessed by John, said,
“ ‘This is my body.’ And if they say, that
“ according to this showing holy church has
“ been in heresy many hundred winters, in truth
“ so it is; and especially since the fiend was
“ loosed, who is witnessed of by the angel to St.
“ John, as to be loosed in a thousand winters
“ after Christ was ascended into heaven. But it
“ is also to suppose, that many saints who died
“ in the mean time, were purified from this error
“ before their death. Mark how great a diver-
“ sity there is, between us who suppose that this
“ sacrament is very bread in its kind, and be-
“ tween heretics who tell us that it is an accident
“ without a subject. For before the fiend, the
“ father of falsehood, was loosed, this deceitful
“ prating was never invented. And how great
“ diversity also there is between us who suppose
“ that this sacrament, which in its kind is very
“ bread, and sacramentally God’s body, and
“ heretics, who think and teach that this sacra-
“ ment may in no wise be God’s body. For I
“ dare assuredly to say, if this were true, Christ
“ and his saints died heretics, and that the
“ greater part of the holy church now believeth

“ heresy. Therefore devout men suppose, that
 “ the council of friars in London, was the
 “ cause of the earthquake. For they put a
 “ heresy on Christ and on the saints in heaven :
 “ wherefore the earth trembled : the faithful land
 “ answered the voice of man for God, as it did
 “ in the time of his passion, when he was sen-
 “ tenced to bodily death. May Christ, and his
 “ mother, who in the beginning destroyed all
 “ heresies, keep his church in a right belief of
 “ this sacrament; and move the king and his
 “ kingdom to ask sharply of his clerks this ser-
 “ vice — that all his possessioners, on pain of
 “ losing all their temporalities, tell the king and
 “ his kingdom, and with sufficient evidence, what
 “ this sacrament is—and that all the orders of
 “ friars, on pain of losing their allegiance, tell
 “ the king and his kingdom, and with good rea-
 “ son also, what is the nature of this sacrament.
 “ For I am certain that a third part of the clergy,
 “ who defend this doutes that is here said, that
 “ they will defend it on pain of their life.”¹⁰

It will be remembered by the reader, that to affirm the existence of bread in the eucharist, after the words of consecration were pronounced, was to deny the doctrine of transubstantiation. In these papers this assertion is not only made, but repeated, and that with a plainness which is obvious on the slightest attention. In addition to

¹⁰ Appendix, No. VII. Wycliffe is commonly understood as stating in the last sentence, that his doctrine on the eucharist was really that of a third among the clergy. The passage is obscure. To me its meaning rather

appears to be, that, in the conviction of the reformer, a third part of the men who had embraced his doctrine on this point, would die rather than relinquish it.

CHAP. which, the reformer has gratuitously annexed to
IV. — these explicit statements of his own doctrine, an attack on that of his opponents—and one quite as uncompromising as may be selected from any portion of his writings. We have before remarked, that the properties of whiteness and roundness, pertaining to the sacramental bread before the act of consecration was performed, were acknowledged to exist afterwards; but that it was, nevertheless, contended, that the bread itself had ceased to be. Wycliffe knew well that this assertion, offering as it did the most hardy insult both to the reason and the senses, was the formal doctrine of the men who were now before him as his judges. This doctrine, however, he affirms to be erroneous, heretical, a mockery of human perception, the imputing of blasphemy to Christ and to his saints, and of all the anti-christian delusions which had been poured upon the church, since the fatal hour of Satan's enlargement, this is declared to be the most repugnant to the religion of the Bible!

Walsingham felt himself obliged to concede, that Wycliffe's confession was a re-assertion instead of a renunciation of his doctrine. But the sagacious Henry Knighton, while inserting the above paper in his annals, describes the reformer as renouncing his creed to avoid the pains of death. Under shelter too, of this feeble authority, the calumny has been often repeated; and it still continues to be the ground of insinuations intended to fix upon Wycliffe the reproach of timidity and concealment. This may have arisen in some instances, from weakness and misappre-

hension, as would seem to have been the case with Knighton; in others, from indolence; but in many it is difficult to view it in any other light than as an effect of that imperfect reverence for truth, which is too commonly the result of party zeal. The denial, indeed, of transubstantiation, in the above documents, is too evident to require farther notice;¹¹ and if there are expressions in both which betray some hesitation of thought, as to the precise manner in which the body and blood of Christ are really present with their visible emblems in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, it is certain that these expressions were by no means peculiar to the present crisis.¹² On the contrary, they had long been, and they continue ever after to be, of such constant occurrence in his numerous writings, whenever this topic is referred to, that a volume might be filled with extracts, exhibiting every shade of sentiment and language observable in these more formal statements of his creed.¹³

¹¹ It will be remembered, that the chancellor, William de Berton, and his coadjutors, when condemning the doctrine of Wycliffe with such severe penalties, affirmed, in opposition to the reformer, that in this venerable sacrament, "the very body of Christ" and his blood are really contained, "not only *figuratively* or *tropically*, but *essentially*, *substantially*, and *corporally*; so that Christ is there verily "in his own proper bodily presence." The reader will perceive that the doctrine thus condemned is precisely that which Wycliffe re-asserts, and in the very terms of its former announcement. See Ch. iii. and Appendix, Nos. II. III.

¹² I have been at some pains to ascertain this fact, as it appeared to me strictly necessary to a correct judgment of the reformer's conduct in

this instance. It was not to be known from any thing already before the public, whether this sameness of sentiment and expression existed or not. For any thing that appeared, Wycliffe might have published a doctrine on this subject from his pulpit at Lutterworth widely different from that now delivered to the convocation. I have read every page delivered from that pulpit which has descended to us, and the reformer's writings generally, with a careful reference to this point. The result has been to ascertain, that if Wycliffe was more of a Protestant, he was also more of a schoolman, than has been commonly supposed. Note to the second edition.

¹³ Thus his work, intitled, "Against the Blasphemies of the Friars," a manuscript extending to about forty

CHAP.
IV.

Perplexity
of his
judges.

But far as Wycliffe's confessions must have been from affording satisfaction to his judges, it is easy to conceive that no little difficulty would be felt in adjusting the measures to be adopted concerning him. It was known that he had acquired no mean place in the affections of the people, and that many of the learned and of the powerful had shown themselves disposed to venerate his character. But from this period, and by virtue of letters obtained from the king, his connexion with Oxford was dissolved.¹⁴ This,

quarto pages, and written after this time, contains every thing to be found in his confessions; the same firmness in denying the doctrine of transubstantiation, and the same partial obscurity as to the real mode of the Saviour's presence in the eucharist.—Bibl. Bodl. Archi. A. 83. The first of the heresies maintained by the friars is said to be "of the sacrament." "And as to the first we say, surely, of our faith, that the white thing and round that the priest consecrates like to the unconsecrated host, and which is broken and eaten, is verily God's body in the form of bread." This he states as his doctrine, and proceeds to expose the absurdity of denying the existence of bread in the sacrament, after the words of consecration were uttered, adding, "we should scorn those heretics who leave the words of Christ, and feign words or sentence without authority" — "since bodily eating was bidden of Christ, and this bodily eating might not be unless there were bread, then this bread lasts after the sacreding." This is said to follow so plainly from the words of Christ, that should "a hundred cardinals" assert the contrary, they are not to be credited. His opponents also are compared to "crabs who start aback,"

as soon as pressed to give any rational account of their doctrine.

Thus also he is continually expressing himself in his homilies. In that on Ephes. iv. he thus writes:—"Christ saith, and saints after, that the host which is sacred is verily Christ's own body in form of bread, as christian men believe, and neither an accident without a subject, nor nought, as heretics say. An error in understanding holy writ hath brought in this heresy." Again, on 1 Thessalonians, iv. "Would God that men took heed to the speech of Paul in this place, both to hold virtues and to flee heresies, for both are needful to men. Then men should hear God's word gladly, and despise fables, and err not in the sacred host, but grant that it is both things, both bread and God's body." Thus also in the discourse on the tenth chapter in the 1st Corinthians, noticing the evangelical meaning given by the apostle to the rock of the wilderness, as a figure of Christ, he exclaims, "And would God that heretics, in the matter of the sacred host, understood these subtle words to the intent of the Holy Ghost, then should they not fear to grant that this bread is God's body."

¹⁴ Fox, Acts, &c.

however, was not until the seeds of his doctrine had been sown there with such profusion as to defy every subsequent effort to remove them. The reformer now retired to Lutterworth, and to effect a wider diffusion of his principles, by means of his writings, he there laboured with an industry which seems to have increased with his years and infirmities.¹⁵

It is about this period that Wycliffe was summoned by Urban to appear at Rome, and to answer before the chair of St. Peter, on the matters imputed to him.¹⁶ His sufferings from paralysis, rendered his taking such a journey impracticable; and had it been otherwise, it would have been no part of wisdom to have exposed himself to a conflict even less equal than that which he had been called to encounter nearer home. When the venerable Grossteste ventured to publish his opposition to a particular branch of papal corruption, he chose an indirect method of conveying his reproof.¹⁷ “If we except the “sins of Lucifer and Antichrist,” he observes, “there is not, nor can there be, a greater crime, “nor any thing more opposed to the doctrine “of the gospel, or more odious and abominable “in the sight of Jesus Christ, than to desolate “and destroy the souls of men by depriving them

CHAP.
IV.
He is cited
to appear
before the
pontiff.

¹⁵ Wood (189) has taken up the calumny of Wycliffe's having descended to recant his opinions, — a statement which, as Dr. Wordsworth observes, does not accord with what the same writer “tells us in the same “page, that this confession was “countered by no less than six several “antagonists immediately after its “publication,” p. 49. The following

are the names of the assailants: William de Berton, who had previously condemned the doctrine of Wycliffe, and now extends his anathema on this document; John Tyssington; Thomas Winterton; John Welles; Ughtred Bolton; Simon Southry; all, with the exception of Berton, being either monks or friars.

¹⁶ See Appendix, No. VIII.

¹⁷ Paris, 870.

CHAP. IV. “ of the ministry, and the spiritual aid of their
 “ pastors. It is impossible, therefore, that the
 “ holy apostolic see, which has received its power
 “ from the Lord Jesus Christ for edification and
 “ not for destruction, can be guilty of such a
 “ crime, or any thing approaching to it, so hateful
 “ to God, so injurious to man. This would be a
 “ most manifest corruption of its authority, the
 “ forfeiture of all its glory, and the means of
 “ plunging it into the pains of hell.” The bishop
 of Lincoln, however, well knew that the sins
 which he so forcibly condemns, were the daily
 practice of the pontiffs. Wycliffe, who was not
 unacquainted with the memorable remonstrance
 of this prelate, appears to have made it the model
 of his own address to the same power, but glances
 more widely at the features of its degeneracy,
 speaks with more plainness of the necessity of
 reformation, and also as to the principles which
 should lead to it. He begins his letter by ob-
 serving, “ I have joyfully to tell the belief which
 “ I hold, and always to the pope. For I suppose,
 “ that if my faith be right and given of God, the
 “ pope will gladly preserve it, and that if my
 “ faith be error, the pope will wisely amend it.”
 From this introduction he proceeds to declare
 his faith in the supreme authority of the scrip-
 tures, and his determination to follow the pontiff
 himself, only as he shall be found to follow the
 Author of the gospel. Describing “ the gospel
 “ of Christ” as a “ part of the body of God’s
 “ law,” he thus proceeds. “ For I believe that
 “ Jesus Christ, who gave in his own person this
 “ gospel, is very God, and very man, and that

His reply.

“ for this reason it passes all other laws. I sup- CHAP.
“ pose over this that the pope is most obliged to IV.
“ the keeping of the gospel, among all men who
“ here live, for the pope is the highest vicar that
“ Christ has here on earth. But the greatness
“ of Christ’s vicars is not measured by worldly
“ greatness, but by this, that this same vicar
“ follows Christ most in virtuous living, for thus
“ teaches the gospel. That this is the judgment
“ of Christ and his apostles, I take as a part of
“ faith, since Christ, during the time that he
“ walked here, was the most poor of all men
“ both in spirit and in possession, for Christ says,
“ that he had no where for to rest his head.
“ And beside this, I take as a part of faith, that
“ no man should follow the pope, no, nor any
“ saint that is now in heaven, but inasmuch as
“ he followed Christ; for James and John erred,
“ and Peter and Paul sinned.” If this language
could not fail to offend, the following statement
would be equally unwelcome. “ This,” he ob-
serves, “ I take as wholesome counsel, that the
“ pope should leave his worldly lordship to
“ worldly lords, as Christ enjoins him; and that
“ he should speedily move all his clerks to do so,
“ for thus did Christ, and taught his disciples
“ thus, until the fiend had blinded this world.”
He concludes with his usual expression of wil-
lingness to retract his opinions, should they be
proved erroneous; and by stating, that as the
providence of the Redeemer was plainly opposed
to his visiting Rome, he trusts the pontiff will not
shew himself to be indeed Antichrist, by insisting
on a compliance with his pleasure on that point.

CHAPTER V.

STATE OF THE REFORMED DOCTRINE ON THE CONTINENT DURING THE AGE OF WYCLIFFE.—CAUSES OF THE PROTECTION FREQUENTLY AFFORDED TO ITS DISCIPLES BY THE SECULAR POWER.—PROBABLE MOTIVES OF THE DUKE OF LANCASTER IN PATRONIZING WYCLIFFE.—THE REFORMER IS FAVOURED BY THE DUKE OF GLOUCESTER—THE QUEEN MOTHER—ANNE OF BOHEMIA.—FARTHER NOTICE OF WYCLIFFE'S MORE DISTINGUISHED FOLLOWERS.—GEOFFREY CHAUCER.—INFLUENCE OF POETRY ON THE REFORMATION OF THE CHURCH.—NOTICE OF ST. AMOUR—OF THE ROMAN DE LA ROSE—AND OF ROBERT LONGLAND.

CHAP.
V.

State of the reformed doctrine on the continent during the age of Wycliffe.

WHILE the English reformer was thus employed in diffusing the principles of spiritual freedom through this once vassal kingdom, the descendants of the Vaudois and Albigenses had visibly increased in many parts of the continent. The secrecy to which their opinions and practices had been consigned, as affording their only hope of security from the return of persecution, was less cautiously observed; and their names occur, in consequence, with greater frequency in the bulls of the pontiffs, and in the decrees of clerical assemblies. We find them variously scattered through Germany, France, and Italy itself; and traces of them are observable in Poland, in Spain, in Bohemia, and along the farthest shores of the Adriatic. But in every locality the same vicissitudes attended them. In many instances, the profits which arose from the confiscation of their property, appears to have supplied the principal motive to persecution; in some it resulted from

that mixture of irritation and contempt that is not unfrequently produced by objects which, if too insignificant to create alarm, are sufficiently important to prove an annoyance. Despised, however, as the feeble remnant of the Waldenses generally was, at this period, they were to do much among the nations of the continent toward preserving the seeds of that momentous revolution, which stands so prominently connected with the names of Wycliffe, Huss, and Luther.

In districts where the continuance of these people was such as to render them known, the nobility, and the proprietors of the soil, generally proved their protectors and friends. This may have arisen, in some cases, from those motives of interest, which the industry and frugality of the sectaries contributed so largely to affect; and in others, from an admiration of those unquestionable virtues, which were found to distinguish these suspected communities. From considerations of this nature, nobles, who were not themselves prepared to abandon the communion of Rome, were often constrained to shelter a people who were known to be opposed to its pretensions. It is probable, also, that they frequently saw much to deplore in the ambition or the worldliness of the existing priesthood, and in the superstitions which were generally imposed on the people; and that perceiving the virtues which the papal sacraments were not always known to confer, could exist in contempt of them, they began in some instances to possess a real sympathy with these humble devotees, in their sighs to escape from the yoke of the pontiffs. But the machinery of despotism had

CHAP.
V.
—
Motives of the powerful in favouring dissenters from the hierarchy.

CHAP.
V.
—

been too completely adjusted, with a view to crush every victim that would be free, and too long sanctified by the practice and the laws of nations, to admit of being materially injured by local and isolated efforts. The reformation to be attempted by such influence, could refer only to the details, or to the more glaring abuses of the system, leaving all its great principles, and the sources of its strength, undisturbed.¹

Probable
motives of
John of
Gaunt in
patronizing
Wycliffe.

The whole of these motives, though in themselves of various excellence, imply much that is honourable with respect to the character of the parties who were so often indebted to them for protection. Considerations of the mixed character described, appear to have influenced the duke of Lancaster in his patronage of Wycliffe. The encroachments of the papacy, not only in reference to the honours and the property of the English church, but, through that medium, on the authority of the crown, had evidently displeased him. He was thus prepared to encourage the labours of a man who proposed to shew, that such things were as unlike pure christianity, as they were unfriendly to the interests of the nation. So long, therefore, as the zeal of the rector of Lutterworth was limited to the discipline emanating from the court of Rome, or to the more obnoxious of the superstitions which its authority had sanctioned, the shield of Lancaster was over him. But some time before the meeting at Oxford in 1382, Wycliffe had extended his attacks from the politics to the doctrine of the hierarchy,

¹ The reader disposed to attend further to this subject is referred to Note C.

and that in many particulars besides the point of the real presence. This distinction between the spiritual dogmas of the church, and her external polity, had long been familiar to the laity of Europe ; and the reformer's innovations upon the one, would not fail to alarm many of his contemporaries, who had been most sincere in his cause while concerning himself only with the other. Thus it was in general upon the continent, and thus it long continued to be in England. To a solicitude for the independence of his country, the duke certainly added a respect for literature, and for good men ; and from these causes alone, he might honestly favour the efforts which were designed to secure some narrower limits to the empire of the popes. His second marriage, however, contracted simply because it promised to open his way to the throne which had been so much disgraced by Peter the cruel ; and the nature of his subsequent connexion with Catharine Swinford, are particulars in his history which cannot be rendered pleasing. From these, and some other less prominent facts in the story of his life, it is but too certain, that however much the political creed of Wycliffe might commend itself to the mind of John of Gaunt, it was not the happiness of that distinguished nobleman to follow the lessons of the reformer with respect to moral obligation and the nature of piety. Wycliffe might oppose the secular ambition of the clergy with all the decision of Arnold of Brescia ; or assail the idolatrous customs of the church with the severity of Vigilantius ; but to inculcate the claims of the christian doctrine with the purity

CHAP. and earnestness of a primitive believer, was to
V.
— proceed where a few only would follow.

It is at the same time greatly to the honour of the duke, that, disapproving as he did of the doctrine of Wycliffe in relation to the eucharist, and unprepared as he was to follow out the plans of improvement proposed in the writings of that reformer, he continued to be known as an admirer of his character, and as the friend of his followers. He had listened to the herald of the approaching change in the faith and customs of Europe with delightful interest; and if there were things which he was not disposed to relinquish, though denounced as unlawful, it was not his manner to forget the excellencies which he knew to be connected with what he discountenanced as error. More than once, subsequently to the year 1382, his authority was successfully employed in behalf of the persecuted; to his death, no man's life was the forfeiture incurred by his creed. Among his latest acts, was a defence in parliament of the translation of the scriptures into English. These he declared to be the property of the people, and a property which no priesthood should be allowed to wrest from them.

It should also be remarked, that, had the reformed opinions been more fully adopted by Lancaster; it is difficult to perceive how his authority could have been rendered equal to the task, of completely protecting the men who had embraced them. Richard, by his extravagance and his favouritism, and by his participation in the disputes which had been so unhappily prevalent from the commencement of his reign, had rendered himself

almost dependent on the clergy. By the queen-
 mother, he may have been taught to think favour-
 ably of the character of Wycliffe; but alone, he
 could never have withstood the enmity of the
 church, which would have been the certain conse-
 quence of his befriending the reformers. His
 uncle, of Lancaster, was the only statesman who
 could have afforded him any material aid in pur-
 suing such a line of policy; and the malevolent
 rumours circulated with respect to him, had so
 far injured him both with the court and the
 people, as to render it improbable that even his
 influence would have been equal to such a crisis.²
 The king possessed neither the consistency, nor
 the energy, which, at such a moment, could alone
 inspire confidence; while a boisterous temper,
 which seemed to forebode the coming disasters of
 the whole state, was constantly disclosing itself,
 both among the governing and the governed. But
 over all these circumstances, there was one Mind
 presiding, to whose infinite discernment it ap-
 peared well, that there should be in the regene-
 ration of Christendom, as in the system of nature,
 a seed time, and a wintry interval, before the ap-
 pearance of spring, and the abundance of harvest.

Nor was the duke of Lancaster the only dis-
 tinguished person in the fourteenth century, who
 was known to be favourable to a reformation of
 the Anglican church. His brother of Gloucester
 may be presumed, from the work which Wycliffe
 dedicated to him, to have been friendly to the zeal

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His efforts
encouraged
by other
distinguish-
ed persons.

² Knighton, 2657. Lewis, c. v. All that may be said in favour of John of Gaunt has been elaborately adduced by

his great admirer, Mr. Godwin. See the Life of Chaucer, ii. 219, 383—386, and elsewhere.

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—

of the reformer, as directed against the evils introduced into the ecclesiastical system by the mendicants.³ In the number of his friends, we also find the widow of the Black Prince, the mother of the youthful Richard,—a female, whose character, equally amiable and commanding, seemed to authorize that interference with the disputes of the period which is not unfrequent in her history. It is conjectured, that her husband, toward the close of life, had regarded Lancaster with an eye of suspicion.⁴ If so, the protection which the reformer obtained from that quarter, while known to be under the peculiar patronage of John of Gaunt, is the more honourable to the mother of the sovereign, and to the object of her favour. The motives which led her to prevent any definite sentence from being passed on the opinions of Wycliffe, by the synod at Lambeth, would perhaps induce an effort to create an esteem of the character and doctrine of the reformer in the mind of her son. But the feeble monarch began his career in too much dependence on the clergy; lending his name, and that in contempt of the constitution, to aid their measures of intolerance.

Anne of
Bohemia.

His queen came to this country in 1382. She was daughter to the emperor Charles the fourth, and sister to the king of Bohemia. By Wycliffe she is described as the sister of Cæsar, and as

³ MS. of Trinity College, Dublin, class C. tab. 3. No. 12. This work treats considerably of theological opinions. The writer states, among other things, that "God is so good that in each goodness he is before, and in each evil he cometh after the effect." It should be added that the discussion

is said to have taken place in the presence of the duke; and that Knighton speaks of more than one person bearing that title, as among the friends of Wycliffe, "*cum ducibus et comitibus.*" De Event. 2661.

⁴ Vol. i. 346, 377.

possessing the gospel written in three languages, CHAP.
V.
 Bohemian, German, and Latin; and the reformer inquires whether to “hereticate her on that account, would not be luciferian folly.”⁵ Her removal from this world, in which little repose was allotted to her, took place in 1394, and Arundel, the primate, noticing her loss, observes, that “although she was a stranger, yet she constantly “studied the four gospels in English, and explained by the exposition of the doctors; and “in the study of these, and reading of godly “books, she was more diligent than even the prelates themselves, though their office and business require this of them.”⁶ The queen’s connexion with Germany, and especially with Bohemia, may, in some measure, explain this attachment to the scriptures in the vernacular tongue, and the favour with which she is said to have regarded the reformers. In Germany, the power of the pontiffs had always to contend with the rival power of the emperors; and, in addition to this, with the less partial hostilities of sectaries, whom no persecution could destroy.⁷

While the nearest connexions of the sovereign were so far interested in the character and the labours of Wycliffe, it will be supposed that the reformer did not fail to obtain partisans among other privileged classes of his countrymen. It was indeed a matter of thankfulness with him, that “many knights favoured the gospel, and “had a mind to read it in English;”⁸ and it is

⁵ Lewis.

⁶ Fox. Acts, &c.

⁷ The sketch of the religious history of Bohemia, which had its place

in the text of the former edition, will be found at the end of this volume, in Note D.

⁸ MS. Hom. on Matt. xi. Bib. Reg.

CHAP. ^{V.} the sincere lamentation of the orthodox Henry Knighton, that these “having a zeal for God, “but not according to knowledge, often surrounded the false preachers with military bands, “that they might not suffer any reproaches or “losses on account of their profane doctrine.” That such men, and their attendants, should appear in arms, was the custom of the age; and hardly worthy of that distinction would they have been, had they hesitated to employ their authority with a view to protect the men from reproach and losses, whom they professed to consider as worthy of far other treatment. To act upon the defensive merely, was to deserve the praise of moderation. We have seen that so early as the year 1377, Lord Percy, the earl marshal, avowed himself the friend of Wycliffe, and appeared in that character with John of Gaunt before the synod at St. Paul’s. But the names which occur most frequently, as those of persons in the higher classes who favoured the doctrine of the reformer, are Sir John Pecche, Sir Reginald Hilton, Sir John Trussel, Sir William Neville, Sir John Clenboun, Sir John Montague, Sir Lewis Clifford, Sir Thomas Latimer, and Sir Richard Sturry.

The father of Sir John Pecche was a knight of Wormleighton, in Warwickshire. He had been warden of the Cinque Ports, and governor of Corfe Castle, and died in the last year of Edward the third. His son survived the reformer but two years. Sir Reginald Hilton is described as of Hilton, in the county palatine of Durham, and Sir John Trussel, as of Cubleston in Stafford-

shire. Sir William Neville was the third son of CHAP.
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— — Ralph, lord Neville; Sir John Montague or Montacute, was brother to William de Montacute, earl of Salisbury; the family of Sir John Clenboun is unknown. By certain of these noblemen, the images found in the churches subject to their patronage, are said to have been demolished;—a fact which suggests, that their attachment to Wycliffe arose from an approbation of his theological, as well as of his political creed. Sir Lewis Clifford was the younger son of Sir Roger Clifford, of Hert and Hertness, in the county of Durham. In 1385, he received the order of the garter, and he will be remembered as the messenger of the queen-mother to the synod at Lambeth, requiring a suspension of the process commenced against Wycliffe. Sir Thomas Latimer was the son of John le Latimer, of Brabroke, in Northamptonshire. Sir Richard Sturry was the advocate of the Lollards in their memorable appeal to the government in 1395; when his temerity is said to have been severely reprimanded by Richard.⁹

Through a series of ages, the drawing up of testamentary documents was left to the taste, or

⁹ It is of the persons noticed above that Knighton thus writes: "Isti erant
" hujus secte promotores strenuissimi,
" et propugnatores fortissimi: qui mi-
" litari cingulo ambiebant, ne a rectè
" credentibus aliquid approbrii aut
" dampni propter eorum prophanam
" doctrinam sortirentur." De Event.
Anglæ. 2661. Dugdale has collected
the information respecting these friends
of reform which is given in the text.
Baronage, i. ii. ubi supra. Of Sir
John Montacute, the antiquarian writes

that he "was one of the chief of the
" sect of the Lollards, and the greatest
" fanatic of them all; being so trans-
" ported with zeal, that he caused all
" the images that were in the chapel
" at Schenele (Shenly in Buckingham-
" shire), that had been there set up
" by the ancestors of his wife, to be
" taken down and thrown into obscure
" places, only the image of St. Cathe-
" rine, in regard that many did affect
" it, he gave leave that it should stand
" in his bakehouse." Baronage, i. 650.

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— rather to the policy of the clergy, and in such records the leading articles of the established creed generally made their appearance. Hence it happened, that any omission in such documents of appeals to the clemency of the Virgin, or of provision for masses after death, came to be regarded as indicating a repugnance to such tenets on the part of the deceased. Nor is it merely a negative evidence of this kind, which is sometimes supplied by such memorials. The influence of Wycliffe's teaching was frequently such as to induce his followers to discard the usual pomp of funerals, and to bestow their alms on the necessitous, instead of adding to the opulence of the priesthood. Thus the will of Sir John Montague, dated 1388, requires "that a black cloth of wool
" (instead of a pall of silk or velvet,) should be
" laid over his body, and about, as also within his
" hearse; and to cover the ground should be
" cloth of russet and white, to be distributed to
" poor people after the burial, namely, as much
" as might make every poor man a coat and
" a hood." Thus also, Sir Thomas Latimer, wholly omitting the usual donation for masses, and month-minds, enjoins "that there be no manner of cost done about his burying, neither in
" meat, neither in drink, nor in any other thing,
" unless it be to any such one as needeth it after
" the law of God." Similar instructions are found in the will of Lewis Clifford, who, in common with the knight last mentioned, commends his spirit
" simply to the grace and the great mercy of the
" Trinity;" though aware that the orthodox mode of disposing of the soul, was to commit it to the

care of the Virgin, and of all saints. Some humble confessions of sinfulness made by these persons, have been interpreted as proofs of their penitence, on account of the sanction which they had given to the heresies of Wycliffe. But such was the doctrine of that reformer respecting the extent of human depravity, that no one sincerely embracing it, would be found slow to confess himself "a false knight to God, and unworthy to be called a christian man."¹⁰

Of the degree in which the opinions of Wycliffe were adopted by these distinguished persons, we cannot speak with precision; but it is certain that their known favourable feeling was of no trivial service to his cause. The wealth of such men, also, was strictly necessary, in the absence of printing, to effect any considerable multiplication of his writings; and their power, which could alone awe the curious zeal of inquisitors, was no less important as the means of preserving such prohibited treasures when obtained. Could it be shewn, therefore, that the knights of the fourteenth century were few of them prepared to brave any serious losses, in defence of what may be called protestant doctrine, it is certain that many of them were so far attached to good men, and to the principles of religious freedom, as to prove the means of saving many of the works of the father of the reformation from oblivion. And it is only from the writings of Wycliffe that we can hope to place his conduct and opinions in their proper light. The volume in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge,

¹⁰ Dugdale's Baronage.

CHAP. V. containing as it does the most popular of the reformer's pieces, and extending to more than three hundred pages, with double columns, closely written, is the work of one transcriber. The same is true of another volume, including nearly the same series of treatises, in the library of Trinity College, Dublin. Such labour could not have been procured without cost; nor is it easy to conceive how works so formidable, and forbidden under such penalties, should have been preserved through so long an interval, except we view them as being for some generations the property of the powerful. Had they become the possession of churchmen, they would have been committed to the flames, or have been deposited among the secreted articles which have sometimes found their place in ecclesiastical libraries. But the reader will perceive from the catalogue of the reformer's manuscripts, appended to this volume, that it is not from such sources that any material information is to be derived, respecting the history or the opinions of Wycliffe. His works are ours, mainly, as the fruit of that mental independence, which began to distinguish the lay nobility, and the leaders of the commons in this country, before the disastrous accession of Henry the fourth.

Nor is it to be supposed, that the penalties were always inconsiderable, which were incurred by public men when they became known to the clergy as the friends of Wycliffe, or, indeed, as refusing to show themselves his enemies. The reverse is evident in the case of the duke of Lancaster, and of several others. But numbered with these early

advocates of the reformed doctrines, and at the same time distinguished from them all by his heroic sufferings, is Sir John Oldcastle, a knight, who from the inheritance of his wife, obtained the name of lord Cobham, and who after earning the confidence of Henry the fourth, and of his successor, was doomed to perish at the stake as a peace-offering, supplied by the sovereign to appease the wrath of an intolerant priesthood. This illustrious martyr was contemporary with Wycliffe; but as the story of his wrongs relates to a period considerably subsequent to the decease of our reformer, it will more properly claim our attention in the last chapter of this volume.

It was not without many appearances of propriety, that the early admirers of Wycliffe's character were accustomed to reckon the name of Geoffrey Chaucer, the father of English poetry, with those of his disciples. The poet was a native of London, and about four years younger than the reformer. Among his earliest efforts had been a translation of the Roman de la Rose,—a poem which satyriized the vices of the mendicants, with a freedom which must have been highly acceptable to Wycliffe; and both these distinguished men found their leading patron in John of Gaunt. It was to be presumed that Chaucer had embraced the doctrines which called for the reformation of the church, to the degree in which they were adopted by Lancaster; and if some pieces fraught with protestant sentiments have been improperly attributed to him, there are others of unquestionable authenticity which place this fact

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V.
—Geoffrey
Chaucer.

CHAP. ^{V.} beyond suspicion.¹¹ There is one circumstance, however, which is alone sufficient to prevent our regarding the author of the *Canterbury Tales*, as being, in all respects, a disciple of Wycliffe, and one, the bearing of which, in this view, has not been adequately noticed. The reformer was scarcely more distinguished from the age in which he lived, by the truth and sublimity of his religious doctrine, than by the purity of his maxims and of his feelings with regard to morals. Chaucer, too, has shown that he could sometimes appreciate a delicacy of this kind. But in other instances he could dwell on licentious themes, could descend to play with them, and to extract amusement from them, in a manner which, in the judgment of Wycliffe, must have been seriously reprehensible.¹² With him, to touch such matters, except for the purpose of loud and immediate rebuke, was not only to be exposed to infection, but to betray the interests of religion and of society. It should be remembered, also, that the poet speaks with reverence, even in his latest compositions, of transubstantiation, and of confession to a priest.¹³ Few, however, are the evils, either in the church or in the state of society, to which the censure of Wycliffe was applied, which may not be found as the subject of satire or complaint in the poems of Chaucer. And if the same things are treated with more severity by the reformer than by the poet, it is as the obvious consequence of a more adequate

¹¹ Godwin's *Life of Chaucer*, ubi supra.

¹² Dryden, with all his admiration of Chaucer's genius, knew not how to

apologize for this feature of his writings. See Preface to his *Fables*.

¹³ *Ibid.*

perception with respect to the evil involved in that apostacy which had come upon the church, and which shed its baneful influence through every part of society. As a faithful delineation of the manners of our ancestors, in the fourteenth century, the works of Chaucer must ever be valuable; and notwithstanding his too frequent innovations on its purity, his labours certainly contributed much to give form and efficiency to the language of his country.

But the celebrity of our father-poet is not to be considered as arising, in any great degree, from such extrinsic causes. Chaucer has been frequently associated with Dante and Petrarch, though to modern readers, even among ourselves, his name is much more familiar than his writings. Reviewing his productions of a graver cast, it must be confessed, that, had his attention been limited to such themes, his fame would have been very much less than at present. His Parson's Tale has been sometimes noticed as probably suggested by the known excellencies of the rector of Lutterworth. But if it were so, there can hardly be a more striking proof of the writer's incapacity to describe, or even to understand, the more commanding elements of human character. The speaker is evidently one of those men, whose amiable qualities can hardly fail to be revered in a parish; but who has none of the power necessary to produce the smallest indulation on the surface of society beyond that little boundary. In Wycliffe, that religious condescension which must win the affections of a village, was united with proofs of capacity which inspired the

CHAP. V. confidence of senates, and with an energy in action which menaced the very throne of the papacy, and provoked its whole strength to the conflict. Sublimity, either in thought or expression, was not the excellence of Chaucer. This must much rather be sought in his humorous notices of the manners of the age. The transition is, as from slumber to wakefulness, the moment his narrative becomes embued with mirth or satire; and it may be regretted, that his vivacity and playfulness are commonly increased by coming in contact with impurity. The Knight's Tale, though a borrowed story, is so treated as to demonstrate the vigour of his fancy. His Troilus and Cresida would have been more beautiful and more popular, had its author known how to compress his pleasing theme; but the whole of the Canterbury Tales, and especially their prologue, should be attentively read by the student of poetry, who would form a just estimate of Chaucer's genius.

Influence of
poetry on
the reforma-
tion of the
church.

Of poetry in general, it has been frequently remarked, that its earliest strains were the offspring of devotion. It was thus with the descendants of Abraham: and among gentile nations, the harp would seem to have been first struck in honour of their gods. The drama itself was a creation of the Greek mythology, and a part of their religious ritual; and it is curious to observe, that its re-appearance in Europe was as an appendage to religion. In those scenic exhibitions, to which ecclesiastics were so much attached during the season of Lent, the steps which issued in the creation or in the redemption of the world, and the

most striking portions of scripture history, all of which their chroniclers had previously versified, were acted in detail. Such performances are still encouraged in catholic countries; and as they gradually passed into the hands of the lay minstrels, they became the vehicle of much wholesome satire on the manners of the clergy, and continued to be until the age of the reformation. The troubadours, who united the office of the minstrel and the poet, and were in fact the bards of modern Europe, rose with the opening of the twelfth century. On many of these, considerable praise was bestowed by Dante and Petrarch; but their printed compositions have not equalled the anticipations which the eulogies of such men would necessarily excite. It is probable that most of their pieces have suffered from translation; and greatly more, from losing that accompaniment of the voice and instrument, to which they were no doubt adjusted with considerable ingenuity. To the troubadours much licence was conceded in handling the weapons of satire; and while some of them sung with delight the downfall of heresy, others, and even a greater number, were no less disposed to lash the vices, and question the pretensions of the accredited priesthood.¹⁴ A dis-

¹⁴ The following is a specimen of the manner in which the catholic troubadour was accustomed to address the heretics of his day: "See now, heretic, if thou dost not commit an infamous perfidy; thou liest like a robber, and thou art in truth the thief of souls. If thou refusest to believe, behold the fire which is burning thy companions ready to consume thee. What, still indo-

cile? Thou wilt not yield! But the flames and the torture await thee, and thou art going to experience them. God ought to punish thee in hell worse than the demons. Before thou art delivered up to the flames, as thou wilt be if thou dost not retract, I wish to ask thee, &c. Whoever does not believe these things ought not to complain if he be seized and burnt. Every country where

CHAP. V. distinguished living writer has remarked of the tedious collections made by Millot from this class of men, that “they will always be useful to the enquirer into the manners and opinions of the middle ages, from the numerous illustrations which they contain of two general facts,—the extreme dissoluteness of morals in the higher ranks,—and the prevailing animosity of all classes against the clergy.”¹⁵ What is thus stated of the poems of the troubadours, is equally true of the romances of chivalry.

The Roman
de la Rose.

To the latter class of compositions, as its name imports, belongs the *Roman de la Rose*. This poem, which reached the alarming extent of twenty thousand verses, was the joint production of William de Lorris, and John de Meun; and was completed a little before the close of the thirteenth century. The work is an elaborate allegory; and notwithstanding some puerile conceits, which occur both in the structure and in the details of the story, and some other defects, it is one of no

“thy perfidious doctrine has been
“spread ought to be swallowed up.
“Unless thou confessest instantly, the
“fire is already lighted; thou shalt be
“proclaimed by trumpet through the
“city, and the people will assemble to
“see thee burnt.” *Hist. Troub.* pp.
48, 49, 52, 57, 59, 60. But this merciless wrath was fitted to produce a re-action of violence. The following is from the pen of a writer of the same order, who had witnessed the massacres of Toulouse: “I know they wish me ill because I have made a sir-
“vente against the false tribe of Rome,
“the source of all decline. I am not
“astonished that the world is full of
“error. It is deceitful Rome which
“soweth it with trouble and war. Your

“covetousness blinds you, you shear
“the wool of your sheep too close. If
“my prayers could be heard, I would
“bruise your beak. Rome, in whom
“all the Greek is found! Rome, of
“evil manners and of evil faith, who
“has made so great a carnage, who
“has established her seat at the bot-
“tom of the abyss of perdition; may
“God never pardon you your pilgrim-
“age to Avignon. Without a cause
“have you put innumerable people to
“death. May the demons carry you
“to the fire of hell.” *Ibid.* 449—451.
The writer giving publicity to such sentiments, must have been aware that they were not peculiar to himself. See *Turner’s Hist.* i. 447, 448.

¹⁵ Hallam’s *View of Society*, &c.

ordinary merit, whether viewed in connexion with the age that produced it, or with the inventions of the same class by which it was preceded. The master passion in the tale is love; and this, together with every abstract quality which might be supposed to retard or facilitate the possession of its object, the writer has personified. When the untaught genius of Bunyan conferred so much dramatic attraction on the same species of machinery, he was doubtless ignorant of the work of de Lorris, and probably of its various imitations. But Thomson possessed them all as his models, when lavishing his refinement and power on *The Castle of Indolence*. It is somewhat more than the latter half of the *Roman de la Rose*, which is attributed to John de Meun; and though the former portion of the work is described as possessing most of poetical feeling and animation, the remaining is more worthy of notice in this place, since, in some of its parts, it more directly illustrates the religion of the period.¹⁶

A dispute had arisen sometime since, between the mendicant orders, respecting the latitude in which their vows of poverty should be interpreted. By a numerous party, a papal bull was procured, empowering them to build convents, and furnish them, on condition that such property should belong to the see of Rome, so as to be disposed of at the pleasure of the pontiffs. But this, the more severe, or, as they were afterwards called, the more spiritual, considered as a violation of their rule, and as an opening to every abuse

¹⁶ Godwin's Chaucer, ii. c. i. 2.

CHAP. V. which had so long disgraced the monastic establishments. Aided by the prophetic genius of the abbot Joachim, these spiritual controversialists discovered their founder, St. Francis, in the angel described in the Apocalypse as flying through the midst of heaven bearing the everlasting gospel. Charmed with this new light, the general theory of the Calabrian prophet was presently adopted; and it was boldly affirmed, that three dispensations of religion were appointed to the world; the first being that of the Old Testament, and proceeding from the Father; the second, that of the New, which had proceeded from the Son; and the last, that of the everlasting gospel, which, after the year 1260, would be found to proceed from the Holy Ghost. This gospel Joachim had been inspired to write, and the surpassing blessedness of the new economy was to be introduced by the labours of the spiritual brotherhood, as being alone the disciples of evangelical poverty.¹⁷

St. Amour. In publishing these dogmas, the mendicants found their principal antagonist in the celebrated William de St. Amour, who, in his memorable work entitled, *De Periculis Novissimorum Temporum*, describes them as being the Man of sin foretold by St. Paul. Of this treatise, an abstract is interwoven by John de Meun, in the *Roman de la Rose*. There are two points which are urged with great emphasis by both writers. "First,

¹⁷ Mosheim. iii. 209—211. Cave. Hist. Lit. Art. Joachimus. The prophecies of Joachim have been frequently printed on the continent. And down to very recent times they appear

to have possessed considerable influence over the mind of the visionary, and to have been sometimes treated with respect by persons of another class. See Mosheim, iii. 238, 289.

“ the conduct of these friars in insinuating them-
 “ selves into the houses of individuals, hearing
 “ their confessions, giving them absolution, and
 “ seducing them from their spiritual pastors and
 “ bishops, under whose care and superintendence
 “ the established order of the christian hierarchy
 “ had placed them. John de Meun alleges, in
 “ a satirical manner, that the friars are very little
 “ disposed to exercise their powers of edification
 “ upon the poor, but that they confine themselves
 “ to the eminent, the powerful, and the wealthy.
 “ They urge, he says, in vindication of this con-
 “ duct, that such men are more exposed to the
 “ temptations of the world, have more sins to
 “ answer for, and therefore stand in more urgent
 “ need of spiritual assistance. The other point,
 “ very elaborately treated against the mendicants,
 “ is their idleness, and their mode of subsisting
 “ upon the earnings of men more industrious than
 “ themselves. The friars alleged that Christ and
 “ his apostles lived in the same manner, wan-
 “ derers upon the face of the earth, and without
 “ visible means of subsistence. But against this,
 “ their opponents urged certain texts of St. Paul,
 “ in which he recommends to his followers to
 “ work with their own hands, and appeals to
 “ those he taught, whether at any time he ac-
 “ cepted any man’s silver or gold. St. Augustine
 “ is also quoted to prove that devotion has by no
 “ means so exclusive a claim upon us, as to su-
 “ persede the exercise of secular industry.”¹⁸

The evils stated in this extract will be remembered as those which provoked the displeasure

¹⁸ Godwin’s Chaucer, ii. c. ii.

CHAP. of Wycliffe; and the reasonings opposed to them
 V.
 — are precisely such as are of constant occurrence in the writings of the English reformer. So loud, however, and so general was the condemnation of the eternal gospel, that Alexander the fourth considered it prudent to order its suppression. This decision of the pontiff called forth an embassy in the following year, with Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas at its head; and it was granted, that a sentence of banishment should be immediately pronounced against their adversary, St. Amour, and that his obnoxious work should be burnt as heretical, by the public executioner. But on the death of Alexander, the exile returned to Paris, and, protected by the university, he continued his attacks on the authors of his disgrace, to the close of his life. When we consider the heavy and involved character of the Roman de la Rose, its great popularity, from the period of its appearance to the age of Luther, is not a little surprising; as including the substance of the controversy which so powerfully attracted St. Amour and Wycliffe, its influence on the approaching reformation was not trivial. By the early reformers, its celebrity was regarded with exultation; while among the more zealous of the Romanists, it was the object of special abhorrence. Gerson, whose name is of such frequent occurrence in the history of the council of Constance, affirmed before that assembly, that unless he could suppose the author of that composition had lived to repent of his labour, he would no more pray for his soul than for that of Judas.¹⁹

¹⁹ Godwin's Chaucer, ubi supra.

*Je pense
 nous en voyons*

That Chaucer had laboured to render so obnoxious a book more generally known, would be sufficient to excite the suspicions of the orthodox, and to induce the reformers to number him with their friends. In addition to which, no small portion of the materials found in his own productions, was evidently derived from that work; and those corruptions of the ecclesiastical system, which the *Roman de la Rose* tended so deeply to unveil, are assailed with equal freedom in the *Canterbury Tales*. Thus the story of the *Sompnoure* describes the practices of the mendicants, as supplying to the infernal regions the larger portion of its inhabitants; reserving its foulest locality for swarms of friars. Whether preaching in the church, the castle, or the cottage, or performing the function of confessors at the bedside of the sick, the religion of these men is viewed as a mere craft, in which fables, falsehood, and cruelty, are made to favour the schemes of avarice, and to pander to the lowest sensuality. The *Pardoner's Tale* is a farther exhibition of the same species of artifice. His favourite text is, that the love of money is the root of evil, and it is, at the same time, his steady policy, to increase his store by the abuse of every fear which the popular superstition might be made to excite. While such is the character which the *Pardoner* is made to give of himself, and which the *Sompnoure* affirms of the mendicant, the friar in his turn asserts equal villanies to be the every-day practice of his accuser. It was the office of the *Sompnoure* to cite all persons who were accused of irreligion or of immoral conduct before the spiritual courts, and

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V.
—

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to enforce the penalties awarded to the guilty by those tribunals. In performing this service, he is said to practise the most odious injustice and oppression; and the jurisdiction of the prelates is described, as embracing corruptions which fully warrant the indignant complaints of Wycliffe respecting it.²⁰ It is certain that Chaucer would hardly have employed the whole strength of his genius in completing these and similar portraits, had he not known that, with many of his contemporaries, their truth would be speedily recognised.

Notice of
Longland.

Nor was Chaucer alone in employing the language of poetry to satirize the disorders of the church. It was about the year 1350, when he had but recently passed his minority, that the poem, called the Visions of Peirce Plowman, was written. Robert Longland, a priest, and a native of Salop, is regarded as its author; and with the allegorical character of the piece, the poet has contrived to interweave some bold censures of prevalent vices, but especially of those allied to superstition, or observable in the ecclesiastical orders. Chaucer's best compositions of this class were subsequent to the decease of Wycliffe.

²⁰ See the Canterbury Tales. The poet who states in his prologue that,

"In stede of weping and praieres,
Men mote give silver to the pour
freres,"

thus describes the Pardoner:

"But of this craft fro Berwick unto
Ware,
Ne was ther swiche an other par-
donere;—

For in his male he hadde a pilwebere,
Which as he saide was our Ladies viel;
He said he hadde a gobbet of the seyl

Thatte Seint Peter hadde, when that he
went

Upon the see till Jesu Christ him kent:
He had a cross of laton full of stones,
And in a glass he hadde pigges bones,
But with these relikes, whanne that he
found

A pour person dwelling up on lond,
Upon a *day* he gat him more money
Than that the parson gat in *monthes*
twieie;

And thus with fained flattering and japes
He made the persone and the people
his apes."

Longland may be described as his precursor. CHAP.
V.
 Six years had passed since the publishing of the Visions of Peirce Plowman, when the reformer's first treatise, entitled, *The Last Age of the Church*, was written. Men had previously arisen, who had opposed the same weapons to the same evils, but their intrepidity and genius were greatly surpassed by Longland. It is probable that he found an early grave; and, similar as were many of his sentiments to those of Wycliffe, he would, perhaps, have shrunk from the daring measures recommended by the reformer, as the only means of expelling the corruptions which they equally deplored. It is certain that the veneration conferred on the poetry of Longland by the Lollards was the principal cause of its preservation. He had foretold the approaching reformation with a distinctness that astonished and delighted the men of a later age; and while the patriot, the Lutheran, and the Calvinist, have since united to perpetuate his fame, the partisans of superstition and of despotism have not failed to honour him with their marked enmity. So popular were the Visions of the Plowman, that other compositions make their appearance at intervals under the same title. Hence, we have not only the Visions of the Plowman, but the Plowman's Creed, and the Plowman's Tale. The authors of the latter productions are unknown; but from the age of Longland, the name of such pieces was sufficient to prepare the reader for an exposure of clerical delinquency, and a bold utterance of the language of reform.²¹

²¹ See Warton's *History of Poetry*, i. sect. 8, 9; and Godwin's *Chaucer*.

CHAPTER VI.

NUMBER OF WYCLIFFE'S DISCIPLES.—THE LOLLARDS CONSISTED OF TWO CLASSES.—NOTICE OF JOHN OF NORTHAMPTON.—PROSPECTS OF THE REFORMERS UNDER RICHARD THE SECOND.—TESTIMONY OF KNIGHTON RESPECTING THE NUMBER AND THE CHARACTER OF WYCLIFFE'S FOLLOWERS.—ANALYSIS OF THE PLOWMAN'S TALE.—THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS OF THE DISCIPLES OF WYCLIFFE.—CHARACTER OF HIS "POOR PRIESTS."—ANALYSIS OF THE TRACT, "WHY POOR PRIESTS HAVE NO BENEFICES."—NOTICE OF WILLIAM THORP.

CHAP.
VI.

Number of
Wycliffe's
disciples.

They con-
sisted of two
classes.

THE existence of such literature as we have seen to be connected with the names of Longland and Chaucer, suggests some important conclusions as to the state of society during their time. If we consider the supply as at all regulated by the demand, it follows, that, among our ancestors of the fourteenth century, the friends to ecclesiastical reform constituted a formidable body, both in numbers and intelligence. These, however, as in the case of the writers above named, were not always to be viewed as receiving the entire doctrine of Wycliffe. If by the term Lollard, be meant, not only those who had embraced every important principle avowed by our reformer, but those also, who without proceeding to such lengths, were known to echo many of his complaints, we may, perhaps, safely conclude with Knighton, that in the year 1382 every second man in the kingdom was of that sect.¹ At such a moment, to

¹ De Eventibus Angliæ, ad Ann.

adopt any part of the language distinguishing the disciples of Wycliffe, would be to incur the reproach of having adopted the most obnoxious of his tenets. Hence it sometimes happened, that the men who were loud in their censures of some branches of papal and prelatical encroachment, were equally loud in their censures of certain doctrines, as those maintained by the rector of Lutterworth. To persons who were concerned to obtain the praise of being wise and moderate men, there remained scarcely any other mode of placing their orthodoxy beyond suspicion, and in many cases even this was insufficient.

Among the more decided adherents, both to the political and the religious creed of our reformer, a place should be assigned to John of Northampton. This opulent citizen is described by Walsingham as a Lollard. While mayor of London, in 1382, he braved the displeasure of the clergy, by invading the province of their spiritual courts. Those improved notions of government, which in every state had been found to keep pace with the progress of its cities and its commerce, were eagerly embraced by the inhabitants of the English metropolis. A new power had arisen in the community, and one, the strength of which the elder authorities were obliged to feel once and again, before they could learn to credit its existence. The baronial castle was ceasing to be the only place of authority, and every gradation of modern society was beginning to appear. This is evident from the measures of John of Northampton, and from that state of popular feeling, in the absence of which, to have entertained his plans

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VI.

Notice of
John of
Northamp-
ton.

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for a moment, would have been a weakness foreign to his character. He not only complained of neglect on the part of the clergy, considered as the appointed guardians of the public morals; but accused them of a covetousness, which had frequently led them to compound with the most notorious offenders; affirming, at the same time, that unless some wholesome severities were resorted to, the dissolute practices which became daily more prevalent through the city, must be expected to bring the displeasure of Heaven upon its inhabitants, and upon the nation. Accordingly, as chief magistrate of the capital, he seized on some of the more vicious persons of both sexes, and depriving them of their hair, ordered them to be led in procession through the streets, as in cases of theft. The bishop and his dependants stormed at this intrusion on the sphere of their acknowledged jurisdiction: but their wrath was fruitless. In the following year, Northampton was re-elected, and through both periods of office, failed not to render himself the terror of the licentious, in a licentious age. He was aware of being supported by the more reputable of his fellow citizens; and their joint conduct is described by Walsingham, as the effect of that spirit of insolence, presumption, and heresy, which had long characterized the Londoners, and scattered its infection over other cities.²

Prospects of
the reform-
ers at this
crisis.

It is mostly from expressions thus loose, and general, that we have to infer the state of the protestant doctrine in our cities before the ac-

² Walsingham, Hist. 1382. Knighton, ad Ann. Stowe's Survey of London. Godwin's Chaucer, c. xlix.

cession of the house of Lancaster. We know, CHAP.
VI.
indeed, that the doctrines of the reformation were ———
more or less known to all classes; and that while various opinions were very naturally entertained, as to the extent in which the proposed change was desirable, the majority of the nation would, probably, have acquiesced in a revolution quite as matured as that accomplished by Henry the eighth, rather than submit to a continuance of the evils which all parties had so often professed to deprecate. Nor is it, perhaps, too much to assert, that a prince capable of securing the attachment of the people might, at this crisis, have put the strength of the papal power at defiance, and have controlled the national priesthood at pleasure. They were but few, indeed, among the clergy, who had hitherto betrayed a disposition favourable to the opinions of Wycliffe. But unsupported by the majority of the nation, and certainly by its intelligence, as in the supposed case they would speedily have been, we may presume that the firmness of most of them would soon have yielded to the current. Such, at least, has been the pliancy of the same order of men in later times. The ease with which the proudest members of the hierarchy were humbled by Edward the first, and that while scarcely a ray of the light of the reformation illumined the darkness, and before the papacy had suffered any material diminution of its power, is a fact, among many, conferring no little plausibility on this opinion. Oxford was the centre from which the sentiments of Wycliffe had emanated to the different quarters of the kingdom; and though the court, and the

CHAP. VI. hierarchy, were after a while united in the effort to exclude his doctrine from that seminary, it was only with a partial measure of success. Previous to the reformer's exclusion from that university, the majority of the students appear to have been prepared for the adoption of a more scriptural creed; and favoured, in this respect, by the national authorities, or even left to themselves, they would ere long have given a strictly protestant character to that important establishment. The study of the ancient classics, was indeed revived considerably toward the opening of the sixteenth century; but it may be safely credited, that the capacity of judging on the questions of legislation, and religion, evinced by the educated classes, and by a large portion of the people in this country before the death of Richard the second, was far from being regained when the English sceptre passed into the hands of Henry the eighth. The interval which preceded that event, was one of some hopeful changes on the continent, but in this kingdom it was a time of fearful declension; and had not the seed time under Edward the third, and his successor, been so devoutly improved, the return of more auspicious influences from above, would not so suddenly have ripened the surface into fruitfulness and harvest.

Testimony
of Knighton
respecting
the number
and charac-
ter of
Wycliffe's
disciples.

The language of Knighton, with respect to the number of Wycliffe's disciples, is somewhat more definite than that of Walsingham. It is that also of a contemporary, and though to be admitted with caution, is too important to be passed over. In the year 1382, he states that "their number

“very much increased, and that, starting like
 “saplings, from the root of a tree, they were
 “multiplied, and filled every place within the
 “compass of the land.”³ So far, indeed, had
 they prevailed, as to bring over to their sect,
 “the greater part of the people.” A concession
 to the same effect is reluctantly made by Sir
 Thomas More. It must, at the same time, be
 remembered, that Knighton, whose information
 even on contemporary topics is often strangely
 imperfect, resided in Leicester, within that
 diocese where the labours of Wycliffe and of
 his assistants had been most abundant. What
 the historian has more than once affirmed with
 respect to the whole kingdom, was no doubt true
 with respect to that division of it. But while
 within those limits, the larger portion of the peo-
 ple were more or less attached to the doctrines
 of reform, it would appear from such records in
 the diocesan registers as relate to the subsequent
 persecutions, that persons of this character were
 more thinly scattered over other parts of the land.
 Still, in every city and town, there were those by
 whom such opinions were understood and revered,
 and from such localities the leaven was variously
 extended to the mass of the people.⁴

The same historian, in attempting to account
 for this fact, which he deploras as the most evil
 feature of the times, has remarked that the sec-
 tarian teachers “always pretended in their dis-
 “courses to have a great respect for the law of
 “God, or, as they expressed themselves, *goddis law*,

³ De Eventibus Angliæ, ad Ann.

⁴ Lewis, c. x. See also Chap. ix. of this volume; and Fox, ubi supra.

CHAP. VI. “ to which they declared themselves to be strictly
— “ conformed both in their opinions and their con-
“ duct.” The effect of this appeal to the scrip-
tures, as opposed to that rival authority which
had been assumed by the church, is said to be,
that a great many well-meaning people were
deluded, and were induced to unite with the
innovators, lest they should seem to be enemies
to the law of God. This writer has also at-
tempted to describe the character of the new
sectaries, and his statements, though but partially
true, and in some respects contradictory, are de-
serving of notice. It may be correct, that “ like
“ their master, they were too eloquent, and too
“ much for other people, in all contentions by
“ word of mouth; that mighty in words, they
“ exceeded all men in making speeches, out-
“ talking every one in litigious disputations.”
So marked also was the contrast between the
christianity of the scriptures, now first disclosed
to these persons, and that which they found sanc-
tioned by popes and councils, that we are not
in any measure surprised to find, that “ both men
“ and women, though never so lately converted
“ to this sect, were distinguished by the same
“ modes of speech, and by a wonderful agreement
“ in the same opinions.” Novel as the event
appeared, the light introduced rendered the im-
purities which the darkness had concealed so far
visible, as to have precisely this effect, except
indeed, where the influence of prejudice, the
power of which is commonly derived from a re-
gard to some selfish interest, was such as to pro-
duce its wonted evasion of evidence. But when

the historian proceeds to describe this people, as CHAP.
VI. remarkable for “a proud and warlike disposition, —
“and as resembling the disciples of Mahomet,
“more than the followers of Christ,” it is not difficult to determine the degree of credit which should be attached to his assertions. It was among the sins frequently imputed to them, that they discountenanced war, and questioned even the right of the magistrate to take away life; while the utmost of their claims, at any period, was, that the civil power should protect them in their persons and property, and that they should not be held accountable for their religious opinions to the ruling church. Indeed, from the above statements, it is evident, that the sufficiency of the scriptures, and the right of private judgment, constituted the foundation of the edifice which the followers of Wycliffe laboured to erect; and their acknowledged adroitness in debate, suggests what kind of weapon it was in which they confided for success when employed in defending it.

But there are other sources of information respecting the character of Wycliffe's disciples, which are more worthy of confidence, and in every view more satisfactory. The poem called *The Plowman's Tale*, was written before the death of Richard the second, and perhaps before that of our reformer. It is valuable, because plainly intended to embody the points of controversy between the Lollards and the orthodox; and to illustrate the manner in which they were accustomed to advocate their respective tenets. The production consists of a dialogue between a

*Analysis of
the Plow-
man's Tale.*

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griffin and a pelican, the latter representing the true church, who, like her Lord, has been called to nourish her offspring with her blood; the former, serving as the emblem of the hierarchy, because strong, soaring, and oppressive. In the conclusion, a struggle ensues, during which, a phoenix appears, in aid of the defenceless pelican, and destroys her antagonist, together with a host of foul birds collected as allies. The Plowman, having finished his narrative, observes that he is not to be considered as a party to the quarrel described, but simply as giving a faithful report of its progress and result.

“The pelican who
To these lollers ylaide his lure,”

commences with a characteristic praise of meekness, and of mercy, as enjoined above all things in the gospel; and as especially commended by the example of Christ, whose favourite emblem, accordingly, was the lamb. As the Saviour was in this world, so it is contended his professed followers should be, contemptuous of worldly honour and of worldly gain; and the clergy who yield to opposite propensities, are viewed as traitors to Christ, and as doomed to fall low as Lucifer. It is matter of sorrowful complaint, that while some would be higher than the emperor, others must exchange the friar's garb and staff for the dress and the implements of the soldier; and that many, to maintain a state of luxurious splendour, resembling, or even surpassing, that of princes, could descend, and with all the regularity of habit, to numberless acts of fraud and oppression. Yet while thus bearing

all the marks of Antichrist, to suggest concerning some of them, that they were even liable to sin, was to be in danger of destruction. By the doctrine of the pope's supremacy, also, the commandments of God are said to have been stripped of their authority, and Christ himself to have become the Head of the church only in name. The profaneness of ecclesiastics is next reproved, and particularly their simony; and while the latter sin affected every department of the hierarchy, their known proneness to debauchery is noticed as extending the worst evils to many a domestic circle. Notwithstanding the prevalence of such intrigues, the same vices in the laity were sometimes visited with the severest penalties in the spiritual courts. It was nevertheless unblushingly affirmed by these holy culprits, that, unless confession of sin should be made to them, its remission must be foregone for ever. But the supposition that the authority claimed by the doctrine of the keys, was really entrusted to such victims of sensuality; or to others, who, if free from that sort of vice, were men of the feeblest perceptions; or to a third class, who, without being fools or sensualists, frequently added the pride of Alexander to the cruelty of Nero, is treated with powerful scorn. By resorting to the use of that carnal sword which Peter was forbidden to employ, and by an abuse of that spiritual power which was committed to him only in common with his brethren, the pontiffs are said to invade every security conferred by the laws, either on the property, or the persons of Englishmen. The assent of the commonalty is

CHAP. VI. declared to be necessary to every measure of taxation; but the pope, who obtained his elevation from the emperor, ere long to become his superior, is regarded as viewing the power of the English constitution in the light of a rival authority; and the king and the lords are admonished to bear this in mind, and to prove themselves the shield of the nation against the meditated encroachments of a merciless despotism.⁵ In enumerating the many expedients of the priesthood to gratify their avarice, the worship of images, and the miracles falsely attributed to them are not overlooked; and passing from the corruptions of the mendicant orders, and of the secular clergy, the same kind of complaint is extended to the monastic societies, who are considered as equally removed from the requirements of scripture and from the ancient spirit of their institute.

To this series of objections, the advocates of the hierarchy are made to reply, and with visible indignation, that were the papal supremacy to be destroyed, the church could have neither head nor order; that to deprive the ecclesiastical body of its wealth, must be of necessity to render the ministers of religion contemptible; and that as the Creator is assuredly the highest of all sovereigns, his worship should be accompanied by every external splendour that wealth or genius

⁵ "The king ne taketh nat his men
But by assent of the comminalte,
But these eche yere not raunsom hem
Maisterfully, more than dothe he,
Wonder is that the parliamente
And al the lordes of this londe,

Hereto taken no lite entente
To help the people out of hir honde,
For they ben harder in hir bonde
Worse bete, and crueller ybrende
Thou to the king is understonde;
God him help this for to amende!"

may bring to it. But it is affirmed in return, CHAP.
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--- that Christ is, and is alone, the Head of the church; that he has furthermore prohibited his disciples from acknowledging any other master on earth; and that the costly appendages of christian worship should be rather sought in the state of the mind, in the justice of its principles, in charity, poverty of spirit, hope in God, and a pure conscience. These enlightened sentiments are then assailed as the cant of a faction, and of a faction whose activities are ever the result of envy, covetousness, and a love of anarchy; and it is boisterously asserted, that each man should deem it enough to live devoutly himself, and "let other men live as they list." But the tenets thus assailed are repeated, and with a deeper emphasis; and the anathema, the stake, and the gallows, are passionately named, as forming the only kind of argument which shall henceforth be employed to crush these pestilent heresies. The heresiarch calmly replies, that the curse of Nero was never more pointless than is that of a churchman in such a cause; adding, that to suffer for the sake of the gospel has ever been the lot of its truest disciples.⁶

Such is the substance of the Plowman's Tale, a work throughout which there is that constant reference to scripture precept, and to scripture example, which distinguished the mode of war-

⁶ See Chaucer's Works. The Plowman's Crede describes an enquirer as seeking religious advice from the four orders of friars, and as becoming disgusted on witnessing the practice of those vices in their several convents,

which were commonly imputed to them. He next meets with a plowman, who confirms all his impressions respecting the hypocrisies of the religious orders, and instructs him in the doctrine of the reformers. See Warton, i. sect. ix.

CHAP. VI. fare adopted by the followers of Wycliffe; and
 — which so generally confounded their adversaries, as to leave them no hope of preserving their authority, except by the aid of brute force. Nor is the degree of improvement which the theology connected with these principles of reform exhibited wholly a matter of conjecture. In all the maxims stated above, we perceive a direct tendency to separate religion from the influence by which it had been so greatly corrupted. While distinguishing so wisely between the formalities of superstition, and the nature of a religion founded on principle, and having its home in the affections; they are expressive of an equal solicitude to call off the reliance of men from the supposed power of the priesthood, with respect to their state hereafter.

Theological
 opinions of
 the disciples
 of Wycliffe.

But the wisdom of attempting to destroy that false confidence which superstition had created, may be seriously questioned, unless accompanied by an effort to make known that better source of religious hope and religious motive, which is revealed in the gospel. Nor can the reformers of the fourteenth century be charged with a want of attention to this fact. On the contrary, with their attacks on the delusive theories of the age, respecting the mode of obtaining the favour of Heaven, they were careful to unite an appeal to the scripture doctrine of a free remission, in virtue of His mediation, who has redeemed the church of God by his own blood. The theological opinions of Wycliffe are known, and it is certain that these, which were in substance the creed of the poor priests, his coadjutors, were widely

disseminated by the activities of those devoted men. It may be added, also, that the reformer frequently speaks of his contemporaries, in a manner which discovers that many, on receiving his general doctrine, became, in his judgment, better men, in the feelings which belong to the nature of piety, as well as in their regard of social obligation. Accordingly, the most devout of his doctrines are rarely noticed as though peculiar to himself, but rather as maintained by him in common with “many true men.”

The motives which render us curious to possess whatever may be known with respect to the character of Wycliffe’s disciples, must impart a degree of interest to such particulars as may be ascertained concerning the persons to whom we have often referred under the name of “poor priests,” and of whom the reformer frequently writes in terms of high commendation. From the preamble to the persecuting law, so dishonestly obtained by Courtney in 1382, it appears that these laborious teachers were accustomed to journey from town to town, and from county to county; that, clothed in habits of peculiar simplicity, and without any licence from the local ordinaries, it was their manner to preach their doctrine openly, not only in churches and church-yards, but also in the midst of markets and fairs, and, indeed, in all places where multitudes were convened. When cited by their ecclesiastical superiors to answer before them, on account of these disorders, they are described as treating the authority claimed by such officers with contempt. The alternative that would be submitted to them,

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VI.
— —

Character of
his poor
priests.

CHAP. VI. on appearing before such a tribunal, they well knew to be silence or imprisonment; and as they were not at all concerned about the spiritual censures which their conduct might incur, it was natural that a summons from such quarters should be rarely obeyed. In the same document, it is stated, that "by their subtle and ingenious words, they contrived to draw the people to their sermons, and to maintain them in their errors," from which it appears that the new preachers were generally popular.

Analysis of
the tract,
"Why Poor
Priests have
no Benefices."

It was to give some explanation of these novel proceedings, and to counteract the design of the inquisitorial statute which was meant to put an end to them, that Wycliffe published his tract on the question, "Why Poor Priests have no Benefices?" A brief analysis of this treatise will place the character of the men to whom it relates distinctly before us. Three reasons are assigned for their refusal of benefices. First, the dread of simony; secondly, the fear of mispending poor men's goods; and thirdly, the hope of doing more good by itinerant labours, than by limiting their exertions to a single parish.

The customs connected with the system of patronage are said to be such, that whether an appointment to a benefice proceed from a prelate, or from a secular lord, the demands usually made on the incumbent are of a description which must expose him to the guilt of simony. To prelates, he must render the first fruits, and many other unlawful contributions; or he must descend to hold some worldly office, inconsistent with the life of a priest, and far from being taught by the

example of Christ, or of his apostles. Men who CHAP.
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— — feel no scruple in conforming to these customs, however vicious or incompetent, may obtain with ease the care of many thousand souls; “but if
“there be any simple man who desireth to live
“well, and to teach truly the law of God, he
“shall be deemed a hypocrite, a new teacher,
“a heretic, and not suffered to come to any be-
“nefice. If in any little poor place he shall
“live a poor life, he shall be so persecuted and
“slandered, that he shall be put out by wiles,
“extortions, frauds, and worldly violence, and
“imprisoned or burnt.” While such was the treatment experienced by the enlightened and conscientious clergyman, though receiving his appointment from the prelates, lay patrons will not be supposed to have been less affected by the spirit of avarice and irreligion. It is observed that “some lords, to cover their simony, will not
“take for themselves, but kerchiefs for the lady,
“or a palfry, or a tun of wine. And when some
“lords would present a good man, then some
“ladies are the means of having a dancer pre-
“sented, or a tripper on tapits, or a hunter, or a
“hawker, or a wild player of summer gambols.” These practices are all denounced as treason against God; first, in the case of prelates and lords, who, by selecting such men, betray their trust, and become the vicars of Satan; secondly, in the instance of curates, who comply with such customs, and who, beginning their career in treachery with respect to their Maker, are not likely to prove faithful in the obligations which relate to society; and finally, in the case of

CHAP. VI. confessors, who fail honestly to censure such evils,
——— “lest they should give offence, and thereby lose
“their friendships and gifts.” One reason, there-
fore, why poor priests have no benefices, is, that
it was scarcely possible to accept of them without
in many ways contracting the guilt of simony.

The second reason of their conduct, in this particular, was the fear of being compelled to mispend poor men's goods. Whatever of clerical revenue shall remain, after food and clothing are provided, is said to come under this denomination. But to be inducted to a living, much gold must be given to a gradation of ecclesiastical officers; and afterwards, many rich entertainments must be made; sometimes for the gratification of lay patrons, and sometimes as a duty owing to the higher clergy when performing their “feigned visitations.” From such customs, it is said to follow that beneficed clergymen, “shall not spend
“their tithes and offerings after a good consci-
“ence, and God's law, but must waste them on
“the rich and the idle.” It is observed, also, that “on each holy day these small curates shall
“commonly have letters from their ordinaries to
“summon and to curse poor men, and for nought,
“except the covetousness of the clerks of Anti-
“christ; and if they refuse to summon and curse
“them, though they know not why they should,
“they shall be injured, and summoned from day
“to day, from one far place to a farther, or be
“accursed, or lose their benefice, or their profits.” Refusing to become parties to such proceedings, they are instantly reproached as the enemies of all episcopal jurisdiction; and to avoid that expen-

diture which the ostentatious and the luxurious CHAP. VI. manners of the clergy in that age required, was to ——— become the object of almost every kind of persecution. “So many cursed deceits,” observes the reformer, “hath Antichrist brought up by his
“worldly clerks, to make curates mispend poor
“men’s goods, and not truly to do their office; or
“else to forsake all, and to leave the clerks of
“Antichrist as lords of this world, to rob the
“people by feigned censures, and to teach the
“lore of the fiend, both by open preaching, and
“the example of an accursed life.” Hence it appears, that if to become conformists, in the particulars stated, was to misapply the patrimony of the poor, and to convert a spiritual office into the instrument of secular oppression and aggrandizement,—to be silent amid the prevalence of such evils, was regarded as not less opposed to fidelity. To be without a benefice, was not to be released from the obligation of preaching; and where the doors of the church were closed, the voice of these conscientious men might often be heard in its precincts, or in the high way to the towns and villages of the land. So many, indeed, and so serious were the corruptions in which the beneficed clergyman was expected to participate, that the root which they had acquired in the ecclesiastical system, is viewed as a phenomenon admitting of no explanation, except as forming the signal chastisement of heaven, incurred by the reckless depravity which had marked the later ages of the world.

The last reason why some poor priests have no benefices, and that to which the greatest

CHAP.
VI.
—

importance is attached, is, that by such a restriction, they should probably “be hindered from better occupation, and from more profiting of holy church.” The charge which they had received from above, is declared to have respect to men in general, and to be binding, “wherever they may help their brethren to heavenward, whether by teaching, praying, or example giving.” This general mission is conceived to require “a general cure of charity, as had Christ and his apostles.” It is observed, also, “that by this they most surely save themselves, and help their brethren; and they are free to fly from one city to another, when they are persecuted by the clerks of Antichrist, as Christ biddeth, and the gospel. And thus they may best, without any challenging of men, go and dwell among the people where they shall most profit, and for the time convenient, coming and going after the moving of the Holy Ghost, and not being hindered from doing what is best by the jurisdiction of sinful men. Also, they follow Christ and his apostles more, in taking voluntary alms of the people whom they teach, than in taking dymes and offerings, by customs which sinful men have ordained in the time of grace.” Were these primitive manners to return to the church, the effect it is contended would be, that “those alms which the people might and should give to true priests who truly keep their order,” would be freely rendered; and all pomp and luxury being excluded from the hierarchy, the principal motives to that covetousness which had so pervaded the clergy, and

proved so afflictive to the laity, would be destroyed. To expect that the people should abstain from any sinful indulgence, while their guides are evidently enslaved by it, is treated as folly. “For these dreads,” it is remarked, “and for many thousand more; and for to be more like to the life of Christ and his apostles; and for to profit more their own souls, and other men’s, some poor priests think, with God, to travel about where they shall most profit, and by the evidence that God giveth them, while they have time, and a little bodily strength and youth. Nevertheless, they condemn not curates who do well their office, and dwell where they shall most profit, and teach truly and stably the law of God against false prophets, and the accursed deceptions of the fiend. Christ, for his endless mercy, help his priests and common people to beware of Antichrist’s deceits, and to go even the right way to heaven. Amen, Jesu, for thy endless charity.”

The concession made in this extract should be remembered. It was not presumed by these itinerant instructors, that every beneficed man was necessarily a partisan of the practices which were the object of their censure. Leaving every such priest, if devoutly performing the duties, whether of prelacy or of the village pastor, to the guidance of his own conscience, they simply claimed for themselves the right of emulating the zeal of evangelists, the office of such being, in their view, less connected with temptation, and more adapted to the necessities of the times.

CHAP.
VI.

Notice of
William
Thorp.

Among the persons who carried these devout sentiments into action, an important place is occupied by William Thorp. Within the parish of Wycliffe was a hamlet bearing the name of Thorp. In the fourteenth century it was the residence of a family, known by the same designation :⁷ and there are circumstances which render it probable, that the confessor referred to was a native of that spot, and a member of its principal household. It is from himself we learn, that his parents were in circumstances which enabled them to expend considerable sums upon his education, with a view to his becoming a priest. But on reaching the years of manhood, he felt some grave scruples as to the propriety of assuming that office. His hesitation disappointed his friends, and so far excited their displeasure, that he had nearly resolved on quitting the home which his conscientious feeling had rendered a place of the greatest discomfort. Apprised of his half-formed purpose, his relatives were induced for a while to soften the severity of their manners toward him. The alternative, however, ere long, before him, was either to enter the church, or to wander a fugitive under the anathema of his parents. If a native of the parish of Wycliffe, the name and the doctrines of our reformer could hardly have been unknown to him. He submitted to his parents, that previous to forming his decision, he should be allowed to ascertain from certain who were considered wise priests, and of virtuous conversation, what the office of priesthood really imported. It is evident

⁷ This appears from the inscriptions in the parish church, and from other local records.

that the men intended were the rector of Lutter-
worth, and his poor priests. The consent of his
parents was obtained, who supplied him with
money, and gave him their blessing, as he set
forth on his journey. “And so,” he observes, “I
“went to those priests, whom I heard to be of
“best name, and of most holy living, and best
“learned, and most wise of heavenly wisdom;
“and so I communed with them unto the time
“that I perceived by their virtuous and continual
“occupations, that their honest and charitable
“works passed their fame which I had heard be-
“fore of them.” After a considerable intercourse
with these men, among whom Hereford and Rip-
pington were then numbered, and particularly
with Wycliffe himself, Thorp resolved on joining
them in their labours. Through more than thirty
winters, he continued to advocate their doctrines
in the different parts of England, especially in the
northern counties. At the close of that period,
terror and persuasion were employed, with a view
to induce a renunciation of the tenets which he
had learned from the lips and from the writings
of our reformer, but they were employed in vain.
His examination before archbishop Arundel will
be noticed in a subsequent chapter; but his sen-
timents with respect to preaching, and the gene-
ral obligations of the priestly office, were common
to the class of men with whom he considered it
no small honour to be associated. These may be
inserted in this place.

Accused by the primate of preaching without
a licence, and of laying claim to a peculiar wisdom
and sanctity, the prisoner replies: “By the

CHAP. VI. “ authority of God’s law, and also of saints and
“ doctors, I am taught to believe that it is every
“ priest’s office and duty to preach busily, freely,
“ and truly the word of God. For, no doubt,
“ every priest should propose first in his soul, to
“ make known to the people the word of God,
“ according to his knowledge and power, ever
“ proving his words to be true by his virtuous
“ works. For this intent, also, we suppose that
“ bishops and other prelates of holy church
“ should chiefly take and use their prelacy, and
“ for the same cause bishops should give to priests
“ their orders. For bishops should admit no
“ man to the priesthood, except that he hath
“ good will, and full purpose, and were well dis-
“ posed, and well learned to preach. Wherefore,
“ Sir, by the bidding of Christ, and by the
“ example of his most holy living, and also by
“ the living of his holy apostles and prophets, we
“ are bound under full great pain, to exercise our-
“ selves after our knowledge and power (as every
“ priest is likewise charged of God) that we may
“ fulfil duly the office of priesthood. We pre-
“ sume not here of ourselves, for to be esteemed
“ faithful disciples, and special followers of Christ,
“ neither in our own reputation, nor in any other
“ man’s. But, Sir, as I said to you before, we
“ judge thus from the authority chiefly of God’s
“ word, where it is the chief duty of every priest
“ to employ himself faithfully in making known
“ the law of God unto the people, and so to com-
“ municate the commandments of God in charity,
“ when, and to whom, that ever we may.” Such
are the obligations which are said to devolve

imperiously on every priest, and desiring to be faithful disciples of Christ he writes, “ We pray
 “ this gracious Lord, for his holy name, that he
 “ would make us able to please him with devout
 “ prayers, and charitable priestly works, that we
 “ may obtain of him to follow him thankfully.”^s

^s Fox, i. 687—708. Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Biography, i.

CHAPTER VII.

NOTICE OF WYCLIFFE'S WRITINGS SUBSEQUENT TO HIS EXCLUSION FROM OXFORD—HIS TRIALOGUS—ON OBEDIENCE TO PRELATES—ON THE DECEITS OF SATAN AND OF HIS PRIESTS—ON THE DUTY OF LORDS—OF SERVANTS AND LORDS—OF GOOD PREACHING PRIESTS—ON THE FOUR DECEITS OF ANTICHRIST—ON THE PRAYERS OF GOOD MEN—OF CLERKS POSSESSIONERS.—RISE OF THE CRUSADE AGAINST THE AVIGNON POPE, AND ITS FAILURE.—WYCLIFFE RENEWS HIS CONTEST WITH THE MENDICANTS.—HIS TREATISE ON THE SENTENCE OF THE CURSE EXPOUNDED.—ON PRELATES AND OTHER SUBJECTS.—HIS SENTIMENTS ON WAR.—EXTRACTS FROM HIS SERMONS.—HIS SICKNESS AND DEATH.

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VII.

THE reader must be left to judge of the foreboding which possessed the mind of Thorp and his brethren, as the arm of intolerance was raised to reduce them to silence or consign them to a prison. They would regard their own fate, as involved in the case of Hereford and his associates; and as rendered certain by the result of the prosecution instituted against Wycliffe. That result we have witnessed, and our attention is now called to the conduct of the reformer during the two last years of his life, which were spent wholly at Lutterworth. But while evidently sedulous in the performance of his parochial duties, his discourses, and his numerous compositions, produced at this period, demonstrate, that his zeal as a reformer had gathered intensity from the means which had been employed to extinguish it.

During the interval between his appearance before the papal delegates at Lambeth in 1378, and before the Oxford convocation in 1382, his

industry appears to have been almost exclusively directed to effect his translation of the scriptures. CHAP.
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That great work achieved, he commenced his attack on the doctrine of transubstantiation; and expelled for this cause from the university, he addressed himself to the composition of a series of books, all intended to demonstrate the necessity of reform in the faith and manners of the church.

Among his works completed subsequent to his exclusion from Oxford, the first place must be allotted to his *Dialogus*. A modern historian, whose patient research has merited the confidence of the public, describes this treatise as a production of the period between 1372 and 1377. This is presumed to follow from the circumstance, that the writer refers to the first of those years as recent. The work, however, is replete with the author's objections to the received doctrine on the eucharist, embracing all the points of the controversy which arose with respect to that sacrament. Whatever the reformer's opinions were on that subject in 1377, it is evident, from the events of that year, and of the following, that they had not then attracted the notice of the clergy. But apart from these particulars, the date of this work is placed beyond doubt, by the fact, that the very passage in which the year 1372 is adverted to as recent, contains an allusion to the council and the earthquake which took place just ten years later.¹

Notice of
Wycliffe's
writings
subsequent
to his exclu-
sion from
Oxford. His
Dialogus.

¹ It is surprising that this should have escaped Mr. Turner's notice. See *Hist.* v. 177. *Dialogus*, lib. iv. c. 36. The printed copies of this work which I have chiefly consulted, are that in the

British Museum, and one equally beautiful in the possession of the Rev. Thomas Russell, A. M. of Walworth. See chapter on the reformer's writings. *Art. Trial.*

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It is not improbable that the reformer had delivered the larger portion of the *Trialogus* from his divinity chair at different periods, previous to 1382; but when those parts were arranged for publication in the form of a treatise, many additions appear to have been made to them; and such as render the entire work a more complete exhibition of the mind of the author, than any other separate production. It is the same composition which is frequently referred to under the name of *Dialogues*; and toward the close of the work, it is remarked, that the form of a dialogue had been adopted, because usually more animated, and more attractive to the general reader, than that of dissertations. Truth, Falsehood, and Wisdom, are accordingly personified; and in discussing almost every point of controversy connected with religion in that age, the first proposes the question, the second urges objections, and the last performs the office of umpire. Through the whole, the attention is frequently called from the simpler views of morality and religion, to contemplate them through the medium of scholastic abstractions; a circumstance which may be regretted, but which, at the same time, serves to render the work a more faithful disclosure of the modes of thinking familiar to the devout and the educated among our ancestors, in the fourteenth century. It should be stated, also, that the native obscurity of many things contained in this book, is rendered still more perplexing by a style which partakes considerably of the barbarism of the age, and by numerous errors which appear to have been those of transcribers or of the press. Yet,

passing over these defects, and the obsolete character of the learning which it frequently displays; the lucid statements of the most important doctrines, which are frequently occurring in the *Triologus*, confer upon it a value to which no other production of the same period is entitled.²

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VII.

The work consists of four books, and these are subdivided into numerous chapters. Nearly the whole of the first book is occupied in discussing a series of questions relating to the existence and perfections of the Deity. All excellencies that may possibly exist, are considered as having their place in the divine nature; and while those diffused over creation proceed alone from him, every thing in man opposed to the nature of God, considered in his spiritual attributes, is affirmed to be depravity, and to be founded in weakness and error. The doctrine of the Trinity is of course discussed, and some attention is bestowed on certain natural appearances which were supposed to illustrate that mysterious truth. After some remarks on the theories of Plato and Aristotle respecting ideas, the writer concludes with a censure on the papal authority—as by sanctioning the doctrine which declared the sacred host to be an accident without a subject, it had affirmed that to be true, which no mind may possibly comprehend. In a previous conversation relating to the

² Mr. Turner observes, “Its attractive merit was, that it combined the new opinions with the scholastic style of thinking and deduction. It was not the mere illiterate reformer, teaching novelties, whom the man of education disdained and derided;

“it was the respected academician, reasoning with the ideas of the reformer.”—Hist. v. 177. Lenfant discovered a copy of this work in the library of the university of Frankfort on the Oder. Council of Constance, i. 532.

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VII.

mystery of the Trinity, the reformer had observed:

“Some men are so strangely mistaken in judging
“on this subject, as to suppose that the light of
“faith is contrary to that of nature; and accord-
“ingly, that what may seem impossible to the
“latter, should be implicitly received upon the
“testimony of the former. But the truth is, men
“call their own darkness the light of nature, and
“hence weakly suppose that the light of reason
“and of scripture are at variance with each other.”

Thus also, in concluding the above observation on the eucharist, it is remarked, that “God teaches
“us the truth, and nothing but the truth, and
“what may be known by us to be such.” This doctrine is inculcated for the immediate purpose of exposing the necessary falsehood of transubstantiation; but it is also urged in this, and in other instances, to secure to the reason of man its due influence with respect to religious faith in general; and the ingenuity of the writer is successfully employed, to vindicate his assent to the doctrine of the Trinity, while rejecting the dogmas which had corrupted the eucharist.

A large portion of the second book is devoted to the speculations of the day on the elements and revolutions of the visible universe; and as a whole, it is chiefly remarkable as opposing the materialism of Averroes respecting the human soul: as stating the old series of philosophical arguments in proof of the soul's immortality: as containing the doctrine of the reformer on predestination and grace: and as treating the pretensions of the astrologer with contempt, and the whole science of natural philosophy as yet in its infancy. The

two last conclusions are truths of which men are now fully aware, but which some of the most enlightened scholars in the fourteenth century would have been slow to acknowledge. CHAP.
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The third book relates more immediately to moral and theological opinions. The power to act virtuously and devoutly, wherever possessed, is said to be derived from the grace of God; and hence it is inferred, that no excellence of mind or conduct can be justly regarded as meriting eternal life. Faith is defined as an assent of the reason, referring exclusively to the truth, and to things unseen; as forming the basis of all christian enjoyment; and as that principle, the declension of which must necessarily precede each gradation in apostacy. The love of God is beautifully inculcated as the only secure foundation of morals, and of social happiness. He is described as in all things worthy of supreme affection; and the love of his nature is declared to be inseparable from that of his laws, which are truly the expression of his character, the revelation of himself. Hence, philanthropy, and whatever is included in faith, hope, or charity, is viewed as comprehended in what the laws of the Creator require. The portions of this book which relate to the evil of sin; to the Saviour's incarnation and sacrifice, as necessary to procure its remission; to the excellencies of the Redeemer's character; and to the doctrines of grace; are distinguished from passages referring to the same matters, and inserted in some other pages of this work, only as being more strongly marked by the scholastic method of treating them—a peculiarity which would not add to their attrac-

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tion with a modern reader. In the seventh and eighth chapters the disciples of Pelagius, and those who only partially adopt his system, are assailed as “weak simonists,” who conceive that grace is to be bought or sold as an article of merchandise; and the writer states his own doctrine respecting the necessity of future events, in strong, and somewhat perplexing language. But the thirtieth and the thirty-first chapters are the most important in the series. In these, the authority of the church, the invocation of saints, and many other errors are exposed; and the sufficiency of the scriptures, and of the aids of the One Mediator, together with some other articles of protestant doctrine, are boldly taught.

It is, however, in the last book of the *Triologus*, that the peculiar doctrines of its author become most conspicuous; and to this his opponents directed their chief attention. While considering what are called the seven sacraments, as possessing different measures of importance, and all as more or less disfigured by human inventions, the validity of each is still left unquestioned. The doctrine of the eucharist is treated precisely as in his *Wicket*, and *Confessions*. In its nature, it is verily bread, sacramentally, it is the body of Christ; and much powerful reasoning is employed, to expose the gross impossibilities inseparable from the tenet of transubstantiation. In the sanction conferred on this dogma by the pontiffs, the writer perceives the fulfilment of the prophet Daniel’s prediction, concerning the desolation which should profane the holy place. “For what,” it is inquired, “can

“ form a more odious desolation, than to see upon CHAP. VII.
“ the christian altar, by the appointment of Anti-
“ christ, a number of consecrated hosts, all ex-
“ posed to the adoration of the people, though
“ naturally they are merely bread, and the
“ body of Christ only in figure? Nor is it at
“ all to the purpose to say, that they do not
“ worship the host, but that they reverence it for
“ the sake of the body of Christ which is in it:
“ for the uncreated Trinity is a nobler object
“ than the mere body and blood of Christ; and
“ as there is no creature wherein the Trinity is
“ not, all creatures should for the same reason be
“ adored.” Baptism he describes as removing
the stain of original sin; and it is even asserted,
that no man may be saved while refusing to submit
to it. Confirmation is also viewed as placing the
soul under the immediate influences of the Holy
Spirit; and ordination, as far as it was connected
with the appointment of priests and deacons, is
viewed as of divine origin; but the application
of that rite to men, distinguished by other names,
or sustaining other offices, is described as an in-
novation, and as of very doubtful propriety. His
subsequent remarks on the sacramental services
have nothing peculiar in them. They are con-
nected, however, as usual, with complaints re-
specting the vices of the mendicants, and the
worldliness of the secular clergy; and it is re-
peatedly affirmed to be an act of weakness, to
concede to the pontiffs that secular or spiri-
tual supremacy which they had so long claimed.
In the concluding chapters, the writer treats of
death, the resurrection, the judgment, and the

CHAP. VII. character of the opposite allotments awaiting the human race after the dissolution of all things. In this part of the work, amid much that is speculative, there is much that is distinguished by its seriousness and devotion.³

His treatise
"On Obedience to
Prelates."

Among the reformer's manuscripts still extant, are many pieces which were evidently produced about the same period with the work now described. His treatise intitled "On Obedience to Prelates,"⁴ was written subsequent to the spring of 1382. It commences with stating, that

³ The following passage has been adduced, to show the consciousness of danger with which the writer pursued his plans as a reformer. We shall meet with many such in his other works relating to the same period. "As all ought to be the soldiers of Christ, it is evident how many are condemned by their sloth, who allow the fear of losing temporal benefits, or of worldly friendships, or of the welfare of the body, to make them unfaithful to God's cause, or averse to stand manfully for it, even to death, if necessary. Modern hypocrites say, through the device of Satan, that it is not necessary now to suffer martyrdom, as it was in the primitive church, because now, all or the greater part of living men are believers, and that there are now no tyrants to put christians to death. This excuse comes of Satan; for, if the faithful now would stand firm for the law of Christ, and as his soldiers endure bravely any sufferings, they might tell the pope, the cardinals, the bishops, and other prelates, how, departing from the faith of the gospel, they minister improperly to God, and commit perilous injury against his people."—Trial. The conduct thus adverted to, as leading to martyrdom, will be remembered as that

which the reformer was steadily pursuing. Again, he powerfully adds, "Visit not pagans to convert them by martyrdom, but rather preach constantly the law of Christ, even to the princely prelates; and if we persevere in faith and patience, martyrdom will come with sufficient speed."—Ibid. Turner. Hist. v. 181, 182. For some further notices of this work, see the chapter on the opinions of Wycliffe, and that on his writings.

Mr. Lewis's volume contains no information as to the date, or the general contents of the Trialogus. The same may be said of the series of treatises to be noticed in this chapter, nearly twenty in number. Some judgment may have been formed of several of these productions, from the brief extracts which have been printed from them; the rest have been known only by their titles. Note to the second edition.

⁴ MS. C. C. C. Cambridge. Trinity College, Dublin, class C. tab. 3. No. 12. For the passages proving the date of this, and several following works, see Vol. I. Chap. v. note 8. This work, On Obedience to Prelates, is a different work from that On Prelates, but the date of both is determined by their reference to the same circumstances, especially to the jurisdiction of the

“ prelates slander poor priests, and other christian C H A P.
 “ men, saying that they will not obey their sove- VII.
 “ reign, nor fear the curse, nor dread, nor keep
 “ the law, but despise all things which are against
 “ their liking; and that they ought in consequence
 “ to be destroyed, lest they prove the destruction
 “ of holy church, and of Christendom.” In his
 attempt to refute this calumny, and to counteract
 the malignant purposes which it was meant to
 accomplish, he avows his readiness, and that of
 his followers, to honour the prelates, and to obey
 their injunctions so long as their doctrine and
 their life should be found conformable to the les-
 sons of scripture. To demand more than this, it
 is argued, must be to require a degree of submis-
 sion, which neither the apostles nor the Lord
 himself exacted, though possessing the gifts of
 inspiration and miracles, and exhibiting a life of
 unexampled devotion. If the instruction of the
 word of God, and the nature of the jurisdiction
 exercised by the prelates, be found opposed to
 each other, reason and piety are said to suggest,
 that the authority of the greater should be pre-
 ferred to that of the less. Let bishops emulate
 the zeal of apostles, and the homage of the priest-
 hood, and of the people, will not be wanting.
 And let the same regard for the will of the supreme
 Lord, as it is contained in the scriptures, regulate
 their application of spiritual censures; or be ob-
 servable in the laws of any christian community;
 and true men will be the last to despise the one

prelates, as infringed by the labours
 of the reformer's “ poor priests,” and
 to the contentions and persecutions

which followed. Note to the second
 edition.

CHAP. VII. or the other. But modern prelates, it is asserted, are too frequently the enemies of all piety; and their ceaseless efforts to assimilate the maxims of the gospel to their own worldly desires, is declared to be the source to which nearly every existing corruption should be traced. The vigour with which these topics are discussed, will appear from extracts to be inserted in the next chapter. It is thus the writer concludes the defence of himself and his disciples: "Let worldly prelates, then, cease to slander poor priests, saying, that they will not obey their sovereigns, nor dread the curse, but despise the law; for in all these three they are clear before God and man, if right, and reason, and charity be well sought."

His tract on
the Deceits
of Satan and
of his
Priests.

Another composition, bearing upon the same evils, is described by its author as shewing "how Satan, and his priests, and his feigned religious, study by their cursed heresies to destroy all good living, and to maintain all manner of sin."⁵ The allusions in this tract to the controversy respecting the translating of the scriptures into the vulgar tongue, and to the existing persecutions, determine its date. The writer complains indignantly of the efforts which were made to diminish the authority of holy writ, and to raise man's interpretation of its meaning into the place that should be peculiar to the volume itself. This policy he defines as "a feigning to be wiser than God." He also censures the artifices by which the religious were frequently

⁵ MS. C.C.C. Cambridge.

known to induce the young to adopt the vows of their fraternities; and to the charge of malevolence, as preferred by the clergy while suffering under his rebuke, it is replied, that if such reproofs are inconsistent with charity, the life of Christ, of his apostles, and of the prophets who preceded them, must form a dangerous example to the church. “Almighty God,” he observes, “who is full of charity, commandeth the prophet Isaiah, to cry, and cease not, and to shew to the people their great sins. The sin of the commons is great, the sin of lords, of mighty men, and of wise men is more; but the sin of prelates is most of all, and most blindeth the people. True men are bound, therefore, by God’s command, to cry most against the sins of prelates, since it is in itself the most, and harmeth most the people.” It was particularly objected, that the censures adverted to were generally uttered in the absence of the parties concerned. But it is remarked of these same parties, that “Antichrist maketh them so mighty, that in their presence no man dare speak against their open sins, unless he would be dead anon.” It is accordingly suggested, that to limit freedom of speech to such occasions, was to proscribe it entirely. The writer concludes by devoutly praying, that God himself would divest the clerks of Antichrist of their power to impede the progress of his truth; and that “he would strengthen all manner of men to maintain the truth of holy writ, and to destroy all falsehood, and openly to oppose, both in word and deed, all hypocrisy, and heresy, and covetousness, in all prelates

CHAP.
VII.

CHAP. VII. “and priests: for thus shall good life and truth,
 “and peace, and charity, reign among christian
 “men! Jesus Christ! for thine endless mercy,
 “grant us this! Amen.”

On the duty
 of lords.

Connected with this reproof of the temper and maxims of the clergy, was a renewed appeal to the secular authorities, stating three “skills,” or reasons, which would induce lords “to constrain clerks to live in meekness, wilful poverty, “and discreet penance, and ghostly travail.”⁶ The first argument employed is deduced from those parts of scripture which were understood as threatening magistrates who should neglect this momentous duty with serious penalties. The second is deduced from the happiness which must be diffused, by extending the influence of an enlightened piety. The last is founded on the political benefits which must result from a correction of religious abuses. From this spirited production, some extracts will also be given in the chapter devoted to the fuller statement of the reformer’s opinions.

“Of Ser-
 vants and
 Lords.”

In aid of these appeals to the magistrate, Wycliffe also published his treatise, intitled, “Of “Servants and Lords, how each should keep his “degree.”⁷ In this work, the author asserts the legitimate authority of the civil power; and largely quotes from the New Testament scriptures, to demonstrate that the principles which induce some devout men to discard the guidance of a vicious clergy in religion, are not such as to interfere with any branch of their duty as subjects

⁶ MS. C. C. C. Cambridge.

⁷ Ibid. See for the date of this MS. Vol. I. Chap. v. note 8.

of the sovereign. To the evils of bad govern-
ment, the writer shows himself to be keenly
sensible; but while reproving vice with the same
freedom, whether found in lords or churchmen,
his protest is entered against the artifice of ap-
plying to the magistrate the reasonings which he
had employed merely to invalidate the false pre-
tensions of the priest. The manner in which the
reformer distinguished between the claims of the
two authorities, will presently invite our attention.
It will be sufficient here to remark of this pro-
duction, that there is no seed of anarchy to be
extracted from it. It is rather fraught with every
scriptural element of social and religious obliga-
tion.

It was at this period, also, that Wycliffe finished
a work on the subject "Of Good Preaching
"Priests."⁸ Its design was to afford a farther
developement of the principles embraced by the
reformer's poor priests. Their first object is said
to be, "that the law of God may be steadily
"known, taught, maintained, and magnified;
"secondly, that great and open sin, which reign-
"eth in divers states, be destroyed, and also the
"heresy and hypocrisy of Antichrist and of his
"followers; thirdly, that very peace and pro-
"sperity, and burning charity, be increased in
"Christendom, and particularly in the realm of
"England, for to bring men readily to the bliss of
"heaven." In a series of articles, the writer then
proceeds to demonstrate the necessity of the effort
made by these reformers; censures loudly the

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VII.

"Of Good
Preaching
Priests."

⁸ MS. C. C. C. Cambridge. See points which determine the date of
also Vol. I. Chap. v. note 8, for the this work.

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imprisonment of men before openly convicted of offence; and condemning every sort of secret process against an accused party, he demands for each man, as an unalienable right, the substance of that security from the arbitrary temper of the magistrate, and of the prelates, which has since become the chartered inheritance, and the real possession of Englishmen.

On the four
deceits of
Antichrist.

The opponents of Wycliffe were fully aware, that the proficiency of his disciples as preachers, was a circumstance from which they derived the principal share of their influence; and it would be deemed important that the authority employed to silence them, should be accompanied by some shew of reasoning. It is accordingly the object of one of the reformer's pieces, completed about this time, to expose, "four deceits by which Antichrist, and his clerks, would prevent true priests from preaching Christ's gospel."⁹ The first objection to this favourite occupation of the poor priests, is, that "it maketh dissension and enmity." But to this it is replied, that there is a kind of peace which the Author of the gospel came not to establish; that the only repose which may be innocently left unbroken, is that which is founded on just principles, and heavenly affections; and that whatever hostility may be excited, by the effort to place the minds of men in subjection to such principles and such affections, should be encountered without fear. If the first objection to the zeal of the new preachers be deemed weak, the second must be considered as much more so. Many, it is affirmed, will perish, though

⁹ MS. C.C.C. Cambridge.

they hear the gospel; and perish the more unhappily, “because they hear God’s word, and do not thereafter.” But in reply, it is proved to be a doctrine of scripture, that the more the gospel is preached, the fewer men will be lost; and that where men really fail to embrace the faith of Christ, many a partial renunciation of sin, and many a real though imperfect virtue, may be the result of listening to its ministry; and such results are viewed as serving to diminish the sufferings even of the finally impenitent. “But wherever a gathering of people is,” it is remarked, “there is commonly some good men, and for them principally men preach God’s word.” Nor was this antinomian tenet, as opposed to preaching, considered merely with respect to the impenitent, but also as referring to the elect. “Good men,” it was asserted, “shall be saved, though there be no preaching; for as God saith it, they may not perish.” It is thus, that this objection is refuted. “Here true men say, that as God hath ordained good men to bliss, so he hath ordained them to come to bliss by the preaching, and by the keeping of his word. So that even as they must need come to bliss, they must needs hear and keep God’s commandments. And herein to them serveth preaching.” Whatever of necessity there may be in the end, was thus extended to the means. The fourth deceit employed to degrade the office of preaching, is said to be “that men should cease from preaching, and give themselves to holy prayers and contemplation, for that helpeth christian men more, and is better.” But it is

CHAP. VII. immediately added, "True men say boldly, that
 " true preaching is better than praying by mouth,
 " even though it come from the heart, and with
 " pure devotion. The people, too, it edifieth
 " more. And therefore Christ especially com-
 " mandeth his apostles and disciples to preach the
 " gospel, and not to close themselves in cloisters
 " nor churches, nor in caves to pray thus. There-
 " fore, Paul saith, woe is me, if I preach not the
 " gospel. Devout prayer of men of good life, is
 " good, in certain times; but it is against charity
 " for priests to pray evermore, and at no time to
 " preach; since Christ chargeth priests more to
 " preach the gospel, than to say mass and matins."

On the
 prayers of
 good men.

It was thus that the reformer continued to defend the practice of his clerical disciples. The reasoning with which the above treatise concludes, was also much extended in a work which proposed to shew, "how the prayer of good men
 " helpeth much, and prayer of sinful men dis-
 " pleaseth God, and harmeth themselves, and
 " other men."¹⁰ In this piece, which breathes a spirit of the purest devotion, the promises and the examples of scripture are largely cited, to demonstrate the excellence and the efficacy of prayer. The same book is appealed to, as teaching no less decisively the vanity of the most costly offerings that may be presented by the hypocrite, the vicious, or the formalist. It is deplored, as among the most foreboding circumstances of the times, that men are so far disposed to confide in the prayers of such intercessors; and thus to yield to a delusion, which not only tended

¹⁰ MS. C.C.C. Cambridge.

to impoverish them in this world, but to involve them in the ruin of the next. CHAP.
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Indeed, there is scarcely a class of men, or a species of religious error, of which the writings of Wycliffe, at this period, may not be found to treat, and in a manner which anticipates almost every fact in our subsequent improvement as a nation. Thus in one of his productions, the manner in which he had refuted the errors opposed to the office of preaching, is extended to a series of similar misconceptions with respect to religion in general. It is remarked, for instance, that by the phrase "holy church," men commonly understand a sort of clerical parliament; by the term "religious," they mean hordes of vagrant friars, or the useless inmates of a cloister; by the expression, "the law of the church," they intend the decrees of popes and councils, not the decisions of holy writ; to yield "obedience," was not to submit to what the conscience had recognised as the will of God, but to bow to what presumption had imposed upon the credulous; and by "sin," was generally meant some venial offence, the guilt of which "might be washed away with a paternoster, with holy water, a pardon, a bishop's blessing, and in many other light ways." Another treatise commences with the assertion, that nearly all the evils of the land arose from the delinquencies "of false confessors, false merchants, and false men of law;" and the object of the writer is to prove the truth of this assertion. The confessors chiefly intended are the mendicants, for they had nearly engrossed that function to themselves; the merchants, are

CHAP. VII. the conductors of our infant commerce, but who, it would seem, had already begun to diffuse the evils of their traffic along with his benefits; and the lawyers adverted to, are principally those entrusted with the power of the spiritual courts.

"Of Clerks Possession-ers."

But at this period it was, in a treatise called "Of Clerks Possessioners,"¹¹ that the reformer mainly attempted his exposure of the irreligion, which, in his view, had resulted to so great a degree, from the opulence, and the secular jurisdiction of the clergy. This work consists of forty chapters, and from its notices of the wrongs inflicted on certain preachers of the gospel, and also of some other topics of controversy, its date could not have been earlier than 1382, nor later than the year following. Each chapter is devoted to an investigation of some feature in the general corruption of the church. One leading subject of complaint is, that the ample revenues which are known to be "poor men's goods," rather than the property of the clergy, should be so commonly spent by that order in luxurious living, and in carelessness of the wants which often oppressed the members of their flock. It is deplored, also, that while the wealth of ecclesiastics served thus to ensnare them to modes of life which were unbecoming their vocation, the nature of their jurisdiction, and of the offices which they were frequently induced to hold, should be such as of necessity to divert their attention, in a still greater degree, from spiritual things. It is moreover stated that the affluence, and the secular power of the clergy, had every where become the

¹¹ MS. C. C. C. Cambridge. See Vol. I. Chap. v. note 8.

most potent engines of oppression—crushing every man who dared attempt a separation between the doctrines of christianity, and the dreams of superstition. If the christian priesthood be ever again employed “in studying and teaching of “holy writ, in devotion and prayer, in thinking, “and heavenly sweetness,” the preliminary steps, it is contended, must be to diminish the force of temptation, by a reduction of their revenue, and by releasing them from the bonds of secular employment. Neither Christ, nor his apostles, could be induced to unite the office of the secular and the spiritual steward; and hence, it is argued, that unless the churchmen of the age should prove themselves to be superior in capacity to the Head of the church, and to the men who were witnesses of his resurrection, the effect of the existing order of things must be pernicious. His prayer in conclusion is, that “Almighty God “would stir up his priests, lords, and commons, “to detect the hypocrisy, heresy, and treason of “Antichrist’s worldly clerks; and to know, and “maintain the rightful ordinance of God, and the “profit and freedom of the gospel.”

But while these, and similar compositions,—all certainly produced about this period, bespoke the growing zeal with which the rector of Lutterworth continued to prosecute the work of reform, a test was applied to the popular feeling in England, which discovered that his doctrines, though widely disseminated, had hitherto acquired but a limited ascendancy over the mind of his countrymen. The reader will remember the schism which at this moment divided the papacy. France

Rise of the
crusade
against the
Avignon
pope.

CHAP. VII. acknowledged the authority of Clement, who had fixed his residence at Avignon: and England was at the head of that portion of Christendom, which recognised the claims of Urban.¹² These pontiffs had employed their spiritual weapons against each other, and against their respective partisans, with the most boisterous freedom: but the last arrow, on either side, had been spent in vain. It was now resolved to ascertain the effect of an alliance between the elements of this world and the terrors of the next. To produce a military crusade against the Avignon pontiff and his adherents, every kind of indulgence which had been granted for the purpose of propelling the western nations toward the holy sepulchre was resorted to. As the hostilities thus devised, were to be considered as the effort of the church, it was the determination of the pope to reserve the principal command to an ecclesiastic; and this doubtful honour was conferred on Spencer, bishop of Norwich, a prelate who had already given decisive evidence of his passion for military adventure. In 1377,¹³ an incident occurred, which betrayed his contempt of the civil power, as compared with that of his own order; but his vanity proved so offensive to the populace of the town in which it was thought convenient to display it, that his life became endangered. His rough treatment, in that instance, may have increased his christian abhorrence of that class of society, which he had scornfully described as the ribald multitude; for during the insurrection of

¹² See chap. i. The story of this enterprize is minutely and amusingly

told by Froissart. Vol. vi. c. 51—65.

¹³ Fox, Acts, &c.

the commons in 1382, while the government was strangely inactive, Spencer was at the head of his vassals, and the tranquillity of his diocese is attributed to his vigilance. His name, also, occurs in the list of the prelates who sat in judgment on Wycliffe at Oxford; and his memorable controversy with Epringham, who was a disciple of our reformer and a magistrate of Norwich, has placed his hatred of the Lollards beyond dispute.¹⁴ The bull with which he was entrusted, vested him with extraordinary powers. The laity adhering to the antipope, and all who should in any manner favour them, were not only sentenced to lose every worldly office and possession, but to be slain with the sword. With respect to the clergy who had become parties to the schism, the bishop was instructed to exert his whole power with a view to deprive them of every cure, honour, and emolument; and it was left to his discretion, to insist on the presence of the most privileged members of the English hierarchy, in the camp of the crusaders. Against all who should presume to oppose the discharge of this commission, though possessing regal dignity, the prelate was to launch the anathemas of the church; while, to such as should enlist themselves in aid of this sacred enterprise, though dying before the struggle should commence, and to such as should contribute the smallest portion of their property with the same view, the remission of all trespasses was awarded, together with every immunity conceded to such "as go to fight for the holy land."¹⁵

¹⁴ Wals. Hist. ubi supra.¹⁵ Fox, i. 582, 583.

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To render this measure as little objectionable as possible to the English court and parliament, it was suggested by the pontiff, that to meet its expenses, a tenth should be raised from the revenues of the clergy; and that every thing obtained from the laity should be strictly voluntary, and bear the name of alms. Such, however, was the zeal of Urban, that more than thirty bulls were dispatched to England on this subject; and the conduct of the English prelates, in rendering these documents the ground of inflammatory appeals from the pulpit, supplied an example which the inferior clergy would not be slow to imitate.¹⁶ “All who should die at this time,” observes Froissart, “and who had given their money, were “absolved from every fault, and by the tenure of “the bull, happy were they who could now die, “in order to obtain so noble an absolution.” It was the arrangement of the pope, that France and Spain should be invaded at the same moment; the expedition against the latter kingdom being entrusted to the duke of Lancaster, in virtue of his claim as king of Castile, and perhaps, with the hope of detaching him more completely from the rank of the reformers. Froissart assures us, that the sums raised by these expedients were considered sufficient for both enterprises; but while smiling at the easy faith of the good people of England, he states it as well known, that the nobles of this land held the absolutions of the church in so little esteem, that with them, unless offers of money were made, all other inducements would be useless. “Men at arms,” he adds,

¹⁶ Froissart.

“ cannot live on pardons, nor do they pay much
“ attention to them, except at the point of death.”

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If Lancaster was ever really interested in the part allotted to him, he soon found himself obliged to abandon it. France was the nearer, and the rival kingdom; and though to invade it under the command of a churchman might occur as a difficulty, yet that churchman was a man of family, and the representative of the head of Christendom. Before leaving England, Spencer and his followers were sworn to limit their hostilities to the adherents of the antipope, and on the twenty-third of April, 1383, they disembarked at Calais. Some weeks were there passed in waiting the arrival of Sir William Beauchamp, whose presence, with some reinforcements, had been promised by the English monarch. But that knight failed to make his appearance: the bishop became impatient; and it was resolved to make an excursion into Flanders—a country then subject to the power of France. Sir Hugh Calverly, who appears to be the only man engaged in this undertaking without relinquishing the guidance of common sense, objected seriously to the proposed movement—insisting that the king's instructions respecting Sir William Beauchamp ought not to be violated; and moreover, that the earl of Flanders, and his subjects, were believed to be good Urbanists. To these obstacles, the bishop opposed a torrent of angry and contemptuous declamation. The experienced soldier was provoked, and avowed himself prepared to execute the instructions of his superior, however perilous, or however much he might question their justice or their policy.

CHAP. VII. The town of Gravelines was first assailed. It was inhabited principally by fishermen, possessed but the feeblest means of defence, and was farther exposed to all the disadvantages of a surprise. The followers of the bishop were scrupulous in executing his commands, and whether exasperated by the resistance which he had encountered, or wishing to operate by the agency of terror, the innocent inhabitants were slaughtered with an atrocity so unsparing, that, according to Walsingham, not an infant remained alive. The earl of Flanders sent his messengers to complain of this wanton aggression. But the devout priest replied, with an oath, that the invaded territory had been conquered by the French; and that the effort of the English to wrest it from the grasp of a power with which they were at war, was an act which required no explanation. From Gravelines, the crusaders proceeded to Dunkirk, where a struggle ensued, in which several hundreds of the English, and nearly ten thousand of the Flemings are said to have perished. The capture of that town was soon followed by the possession of others, where the inhabitants hoped to protect themselves from the ferocity of the victors by the show of submission. Spencer, it will be supposed, was elated beyond measure by these triumphs. So much was this the case, that he boasted of his readiness to measure his strength with that of the king of France, and of the duke of Burgundy, who had united their forces, and were proceeding by slow marches to strip him of his spoil. On their approach, his acquisitions fell from his grasp,

with a rapidity equal to that with which they had been secured. Any rash man, in the same circumstances, might have made them; and rash men only, could for a moment have regarded them as permanent. His escape to England was among the fortunate incidents of his life: but the censure and contempt with which he was every where assailed on his return, must have been one of the severest trials that his vain and irritable spirit could have had to sustain.¹⁷

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The reader will remember, that the proceedings against Wycliffe before the Oxford convocation in 1382, derived much of their severity from the hatred of the mendicants. Stern as the discussions had often been betwixt the religious orders, and the secular clergy, their animosities were for a while suspended, that the parties regarded as hostile to both might be at once overpowered. The ebullition of fanaticism described above, took place in 1383, and in giving it existence, the officious zeal of the new orders was every where prominent. The reformer had no sooner returned to Lutterworth, than he published an extended commentary on the text, "Beware of the leaven of the pharisees, which is hypocrisy."¹⁸ The design of this address was to identify the followers of St. Francis and of St. Dominic, in the existing system, with the pharisees of Judea at the period of the advent. Both

Wycliffe
renews his
contest with
the mendi-
cants.

¹⁷ Froissart. Wals. The companions of Spencer shared in his disgrace. Robert de Foulmer, a clergyman, and treasurer to the bishop of Norwich, was imprisoned, and 5000 golden francs levied on his goods. A similar punishment was also awarded to Sir

W. Elmham, Sir W. Farndon, Sir Thomas Trivet, and Robert Fitzrauf. This sentence, however, which was announced on the 6th of March, was rescinded on the 14th of May. Rymer, ann. 1384.

¹⁸ MS. C.C.C. Cambridge.

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parties are minutely described, and they are said to rival each other in the sanctity of their pretensions, and in the character and multitude of their offences. But as the vices of the friars were rendered still more dark by the veil of their extraordinary pretension to piety, their hypocrisy is declared to be “the most accursed and poisonous of all.” It is affirmed also, that “if by subtlety, by hypocrisy, and by help from the laws of Antichrist, they hinder curates and poor priests from teaching men the law of God, for fear lest their hypocrisy be perceived, and their winning and worldly fame be laid low,—they are accursed man-slayers, and the cause of destruction to all the souls that perish from default in knowing and keeping the commandments of God. And if they preach principally for worldly gain and vain-glory, and so preach themselves to be praised of men, and not simply and plainly the gospel of Christ, for his glory, and the gaining of men’s souls, they deal unfaithfully with the word of God, as Paul saith.”¹⁹ He afterward adverts to the mendi-

¹⁹ The following portrait from the *Sompnoure’s Tale*, in Chaucer, may be worthy of a place here, from its strict agreement with Wycliffe’s notices of the same order :

“ Lordings ! there is in Yorkshire, as
I gesse,
A marsh contree ycalled Holdernesse,
In which ther went a limitour aboute,
To preche — and, eke, to beg, it is no
doubte.
And so befell, that on a day this frere,
Had preched at a chirche in his manere,

And specially, aboven every thing
Excited he the peple in his preching
To trentalls, and to yeve, for Goddes
sake,
Wherwith men mighten holy houses
make,
Ther as divine service is honoured,—
Not ther as it is wasted and devoured ;
Ne ther it nedeth not for to be yeven
As to possessioners, that morven leven
(Thanked be God) in well and abundance
‘ Trentalls,’ said he, ‘ deliveren fro
penance

cants as parties to the existing schism in the papacy, and to each party as declaring their opponents to be "heretics out of belief." His own assertion is, that "both are indeed out of belief;" and that they "are bringing all other men out of belief." Nor is the reformer less decisive, when referring to the duties of the men who profess to deplore these and similar evils. He complains of "the cowardice of Christ's disciples, if they spare from fear of bodily pain or death, to tell openly the truth of God's law. And therefore," he observes, "tellethe Christ often to his disciples, that they should fear God above all, and fear nothing else. Truly, saith

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' Hir frendes soules as wel olde as yonge.

' Ye, whan that they ben hastily ysonge,

' (Not for to hold a preest jolif and gay;

' He singeth not but o masse on a day;)

' Delivereth out, quod he, anon, the soules.

' Ful hard it is, with fleshhook, or with oules,

' To ben yclawed; or to bren, or bake,

' Now spede you hastily for Cristes sake.'

And whan this frere had said all his entent,

With 'qui cum patre' forth his way he went.

Whan folk in chirche had yeve him what hem lest,

He went his way, no lenger wold he rest.

With scrippe, and tipped staf, ytucked hie:

In every hous he gan to pore and prie,

And begged mele and chese, or elles corn,

His felaw had a staf tipped with horn,

A pair of tables all of ivory,

And a pointel ypolished fetisly,—

And wrote alway the names, as he stood,

Of alle folk that yave hem any good,

Askaunce that he wolde for hem preye,

' Yeve us a bushel whete, or malt, or reye,

' A Goddes kichel, or a trippe of chese;

' Or elles what you list, we may not chese

' A Goddes halfpeny, or a masse peny,

' Or yeve us of your braun, if he have any,

' A dagon of your blanket, leve dame!

' Our sustre dere! (lo, here I write your name,)

' Bacon or beef, or swiche thing as ye find.'

A sturdy harlot went hem, ay, behind,

That was her hostes man, and bare a sakke,

And what men gave hem laid it on his bakke,

And, whan that he was out at dore,—anon

He planed away the names everich on,

That he before had written in his tables,

He served him with nifles and with fables."

CHAP. VII. “ Christ, ‘ I will forewarn you whom you shall
 ——— “ fear, fear not those who can destroy the body,
 “ and no more, but fear him who can destroy
 “ both body and soul in hell, yea I say, fear ye
 “ him.’ Here Christ would that men should fear
 “ nothing, chiefly, but God, and the offending of
 “ him. For if men fear bodily pain and death,
 “ and therefore cease to tell openly the truth,
 “ they are with this unable to regain the bliss of
 “ heaven. But if they say openly and steadily
 “ the truth of God, nothing may harm them, so
 “ they keep patience and charity.” It was to
 comfort his disciples in suffering, and especially
 in the season of persecution, that the Saviour re-
 minded them of the Father’s care as extending
 to the falling sparrow, and to the hairs of their
 head ; “ for thus should they learn to believe that
 “ nothing comes without his knowledge and his
 “ ordaining, and that it is all for the best.” He is
 also said to “ make his servants ready to die for
 “ his law by hope of reward, when he saith thus,
 “ ‘ each who shall acknowledge me before men,
 “ shall the Son of man acknowledge before the
 “ angels.’ ”

The date of this production is certain, from
 its allusion to the papal schism, and to the con-
 troversy respecting the eucharist.²⁰ A few months
 only had elapsed from the time of its publication,
 when the instructions of Urban, with a view to
 destroy the power of his rival, called the mendi-
 cant orders into new activity and importance.
 It was their labour and artifice, which did most

²⁰ This is the tract on which the no- adverted to, appears. See Vol. i.
 tice by archbishop Usher, already 304, 305.

toward involving the states of Christendom, in all the calamities of a religious war. Their ardour to crowd the ranks of the crusaders, roused the indignation of the rector of Lutterworth, and during Spencer's adventure in Flanders, produced his treatise intitled, "Objections to Freres," a work in which he has concentrated his objections to the character and opinions of that class of men.²¹

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VII.

His work
intitled Ob-
jections to
Freres.

It was near the same time that the reformer composed his important treatise called "The Sentence of the Curse Expounded."²² The war in Flanders, waged "for the love of two false priests, who are open antichrists," is noticed in the sixteenth chapter as still in progress. The date of the work is thus determined. It is divided into twenty-nine chapters, and extends to a hundred quarto pages. As its title imports, its design is to expound the doctrine of spiritual censures.²³ Each chapter contemplates some well known application of this power; and while the authority itself is in some instances questioned, in others it is viewed as improperly exercised, and in others the men inflicting the supposed penalties are shewn to be themselves, and according to their own maxims, far greater offenders than the parties accursed. Thus the denunciation

On the Sen-
tence of the
Curse Ex-
pounded.

²¹ See Vol. I. 265—272.

²² MS. C.C.C. Cambridge.

²³ The censures principally noticed in this exposition, are those which were pronounced in the service of every church four times a year. The form thus began:—"I denounce, and shewe for accursed, all those that fraunchyse of holy chirche, bryke, or dystrouble, or are agen the state

"of holy chirche, or thereto assent
"with deed or counseyle. And also
"all those that pryve holy chiroche of
"any ryght, or make of holy chirche
"any laye fee that is allowed or sanc-
"tified," &c. &c. Festival, fol. 200.
Having in this manner protected the
ecclesiastical state, the form proceeds
to other matters.

CHAP. VII. uttered four times a year against heretics, is considered as more justly incurred by the reigning clergy, than by any portion of the laity, if by heresy be meant, “according to St. Austin, the “maintenance of error against holy writ;” and the anathemas pronounced on secular men who invade the property of the priesthood, are shewn to be much more applicable to churchmen themselves, who have long conspired to estrange the larger part of such possessions from their original design. In this manner, the whole machinery of spiritual domination is scrutinized. In its details, as well as in its more general features, it is exhibited as arising from presumption and impiety; as tending to perpetuate the present character of the clergy, and to enslave and debase every passion and faculty in the soul of their victims. The solemn and often repeated counsel of the writer is, that men should study the will of God, and allow their apprehensions of good or evil to be affected by human authority, only as the exercise of that authority should be known to accord with the scriptures. The work, indeed, is replete with almost every sentiment distinguishing the religion of the Bible from that of the papal power.

Of Prelates,
Curates, and
Priesthood.

A few months only could have elapsed since publishing the above treatise, when the reformer composed his work “On Prelates,” and nearly contemporary with this was the publication of his work, intitled, “How the Office of Curates is “ordained of God,” and of another described as “For the Order of Priesthood.”²⁴ The first of

²⁴ MS. C. C. C. Cambridge. See of the first of these works is determined by the particulars stated in Vol. I. Chap. v. Note 8. The date

these publications consists of forty-three chapters; the last, which is the shortest, extends to twenty-nine. The intention of the writer is to state, on the authority of scripture, the duties of the clergy sustaining the several ecclesiastical offices; to expose the frequent vices and deficiencies of the men on whom these solemn responsibilities devolved; and to point out the evils resulting from the degeneracy of churchmen, with respect both to the present and the future, to the people and themselves. In the next chapter some extracts will be given from each of these pieces, demonstrating the zeal with which Wycliffe continued to advocate the cause of enlightened piety, and of social improvement.

Another production which appeared during this active period of the reformer's life, is worthy of notice, as elicited by the controversy which arose, respecting the translating of the scriptures into the mother tongue, and as expressing the judgment of Wycliffe concerning the authority of tradition, and the infallibility of the church.²⁵ He commences by stating that "our Lord Jesus Christ ordained that his gospel should be fully known, and maintained against heretics, and men out of belief, by the writings of the four Evangelists; and that accordingly the devil studieth by Antichrist, and his false worldly clerks,

On the labour of Antichrist and of his clerks to destroy holy writ, &c. &c.

the note referred to. The work on Curates could not have appeared until about 1380, as it notices the arguments employed to prevent secular men from "meddling them with the gospel, to read it in the mother tongue." c. xxvi. The contents of the third are equally deci-

sive of its date, as subsequent to the persecutions which began soon after the insurrection of the commons. Note to the second edition.

²⁵ MS. C.C.C. Cambridge. "How antichrist and his clerks travail to destroy holy writ," &c. &c. &c.

CHAP. VII. “ to destroy holy writ, and the belief of christian
“ men, by four accursed methods, or false reason-
“ ings. 1st. That the church is of more autho-
“ rity and credence than any gospel ; 2nd. That
“ Augustine saith, he would not believe in the
“ gospel if the church had not taught him so ;
“ 3rd. That no man now alive knoweth which is
“ the gospel, except it be by an approval of the
“ church ; 4th. And hence, if men say that they
“ believe this to be the gospel of Matthew, or
“ John, they do so for no cause but that the church
“ confirmeth it, and teacheth it.” In support of
the first assertion, it was usual to remark, that
the supreme authority of the church is evident
from the fact, that in the early ages it devolved
upon its members to distinguish between the true
and the spurious gospels. But to this it is replied,
that “ these far-sighted heretics understand by the
“ church, the pope of Rome, and his cardinals,
“ and the multitude of worldly priests, assenting
“ to his simony and lordship as above that of all
“ the kings and emperors of this world. It were
“ not to their purpose else thus to magnify the
“ church.” It is contended, however, that eccle-
siastics alone do not constitute the church ; and
if they did, the pastors of primitive times are de-
scribed as men of holy life, and moved by the
Holy Ghost, whereas the clergy of later ages have
too often betrayed their contempt of every thing de-
serving the name of sanctity. Still they claim the
homage due to infallible guides. But it is argued,
that to concede their pretensions, must be to share
in the guilt of their presumption and impiety.
The term church, as used by Augustine, is inter-

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preted as referring merely “ to Christ, the head of
“ holy church, to the saints in heaven, and to the
“ apostles.” The men who assert that the most
illustrious of the fathers “ would not have be-
“ lieved the gospel of Jesus Christ, unless the
“ accursed multitude of worldly clerks had ap-
“ proved it,” are described as adhering to this
artifice for the purpose of colouring their own
“ false understanding and heresy, by the name
“ of that holy doctor. For by this means, the
“ clerks of Antichrist condemn the faith of chris-
“ tian men, and the commandments of God, and
“ the doctrines of charity, and bring in their own
“ wayward laws—therefore christian men should
“ stand to the death for the maintenance of Christ’s
“ gospel, and for the true understanding thereof,
“ obtained by holy life and great study!”

The four assertions above stated, are said to be the four wheels which chiefly accelerate the car of Antichrist through the world. In meeting the two remaining objections, the writer affirms, in powerful language, that the most obscure student of the Bible may find in that book a more certain guide to truth, than in the pontiffs, or in the wisest of their councils. “ Christian men,” he observes, “ are certain of the reality of their faith by the “ gracious gift of Jesus Christ; and that the “ truth in the gospel was taught by Christ and his “ apostles, though all the clerks of Antichrist say “ the contrary never so fast, and on pain of their “ curse, and imprisonment, and burning. And “ this faith is not grounded on the pope and his “ cardinals, for then it must fail, and be undone, “ as they fail and are sometimes destroyed; but

CHAP. VII. “ it rests on Jesus Christ, God and man, and on
“ the Holy Trinity, and so it may never fail,
“ except from his default, who while he should
“ love and serve God, faileth in these things.
“ Almighty God, and his truth, are the foundation
“ of the faith of christian men; and as St. Paul
“ saith, ‘ other foundation may no man set beside
“ that which is set, that is, Jesus Christ.’ There-
“ fore, though Antichrist and all his clerks were
“ buried deep in hell, for their simony and pride,
“ and other sins, yet the faith of the christian
“ faileth not, because these are not the ground
“ thereof, but Jesus Christ. He is our God, and
“ our best Master; and ever ready to teach true
“ men all things which are profitable, and needful
“ to their souls. But they would have, that
“ whatever these prelates teach openly and main-
“ tain stedfastly, were of as great authority, and
“ even more than is the gospel of Christ. And
“ thus they would destroy holy writ, and christian
“ faith, and at length maintain that whatever they
“ do is no sin. But christian men receive their
“ faith of God, as his gracious gift. He giveth
“ them the knowing, and the understanding of
“ truths, needful to save their souls; giving them
“ grace to assent in their heart to those truths.
“ And if Antichrist say that each man may
“ pretend that he has a right faith, and a good
“ understanding of holy writ when he is in error;
“ we answer, let a man seek in all things truly
“ the honour of God, and live justly to God and
“ man; and to him, God will not fail in any
“ thing that is needful, neither in faith nor under-
“ standing, nor in answer against his enemies.”

He concludes by praying “ that God Almighty CHAP.
 “ would strengthen his little flock against Anti- VII.
 “ christ, that they may seek truly the honour of
 “ Jesus Christ, and the salvation of the souls of
 “ men ; that they may despise Antichrist’s boast-
 “ ing and pretended power, and willingly, and
 “ even joyfully suffer pain and reproach in the
 “ world for the name of Jesus Christ and his
 “ gospel ; affording a steady example to others to
 “ follow them, so as to conquer the high bliss of
 “ heaven by glorious martyrdom, as other saints
 “ before them have done. Jesu ! for thy endless
 “ might, endless wisdom, endless goodness, and
 “ charity, grant to us sinful wretches this love of
 “ thee. Amen.”

There is yet one composition belonging to this period, which must obtain a passing notice. It is on “ the seven deadly sins,” in treating of which, the reformer adverts to the crusade against the antipope, and delivers some novel sentiments on the practice of war. The treatise consists of about eighty quarto pages, and, as its title will indicate, it touches on a variety of topics.²⁶ By dividing the members of the visible church into three classes, the writer is enabled to shew how the same forbidden passions were operating through the different portions of society ; but the chief peculiarity of the work, is its announcement of those humane doctrines with respect to war, which have been advocated with no mean ability, in more recent times, by the disciples of Penn, and Barclay. The doctrine of the con-

Treatise on
the seven
deadly sins.

²⁶ MS. Bibl. Bodl. The same topics occur in the third book of his *Tri-* logus, and are treated in the same manner.

CHAP. VII. temporary clergy is said to be, "that it is lawful
 " to annoy an enemy in whatever way you can."
 But it is remarked, that "the charity of Christ
 " biddeth the contrary." Nevertheless, "to keep
 " men fighting, though humanity teaches that men
 " should not fight, Antichrist argues, that as an
 " adder by his nature stings a man who treads on
 " him, why should not we fight against our
 " enemies, especially as they would else destroy
 " us, and ruin their own souls? It is for love,
 " therefore, that we chastise them. But what man
 " that hath wit, cannot see this fallacy?"

With respect to all offensive wars, he thus
 writes. "As to the title of conquest, we should
 " understand that if God enjoin conquest, it may
 " then be lawful, as in the case of the children
 " of Israel. When a kingdom by sin has for-
 " feited, against its chief Lord Christ, in punish-
 " ment of such trespass, he may give it to another
 " people. But men should not dream that a
 " people have so sinned, and that God will thus
 " punish them, except God tell it them." If to
 this it be objected, that the pope approves cru-
 sades, it is urged in reply, that as St. Peter could
 err, his successor may perhaps be found to inherit
 his infirmity in that respect along with his power.
 It is admitted that under the law devout men
 were soldiers, but it is remarked that they fought
 with God's enemies, to avenge God's injuries, and
 for no other cause; and whatever hostility is com-
 menced without a special commission from above,
 is declared to be no less criminal under the present
 dispensation, than it would have been under the
 Jewish theocracy. An attention to this simple

fact is noticed, as including every thing necessary to realize the vision of the prophet, when men shall break their swords into ploughshares, and spears into pruninghooks, and nations shall learn war no more. CHAP.
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The means of self-defence, however, are not considered as relinquished, even by the man who deems an appeal to mortal conflict, to be in every case unlawful. It is observed, “that angels with-
“ stood fiends, and many men with right of law
“ withstand their enemies, and yet they kill
“ them not, neither fight with them. The wise
“ men of the world hold this for wisdom, and
“ have thus vanquished their enemies without
“ striking them; and men of the gospel, by
“ patience, and the prospect of rest and peace,
“ have vanquished through the suffering of death,
“ just as we may do now. But here men of the
“ world come and say, that by this wise, king-
“ doms would be destroyed; but here our faith
“ teaches, that since Christ is our God, kingdoms
“ should be thus established, and their enemies
“ overcome. But peradventure some men would
“ lose their worldly riches—and what harm were
“ thereof? Well, indeed, I know, that men will
“ scorn this doctrine. But men who would be
“ martyrs for the law of God, will hold thereby.
“ Lord, what honour falls to a knight that he kills
“ many men; the hangman killeth many more,
“ and with a better title. Better were it for men
“ to be butchers of beasts, than butchers of their
“ brethren!”²⁷ As according to “common law,
“ no man will make battle, except he have leave

²⁷ MS. Hom. Bib. Reg. 18. b. ix. 109.

CHAP. VII. “ from the prince of the people, so,” it is observed,
 — “ no man should take vengeance, unless God move
 “ him, and warn him as his instrument, saying,
 “ *how* he will have vengeance.” Even knights,
 though “ approved of God to defend his church
 “ by strength,” are regarded as under the inhibi-
 tion “ to kill no man.”

While such were the reformer's sentiments on war in general, the reader will expect his loud condemnation of the martial enterprise entrusted to the bishop of Norwich. It is thus he refers to it. “ Christ is a good shepherd, for he puts
 “ his own life for the saving of the sheep. But
 “ Antichrist is a wolf of ravening, for he ever
 “ does the reverse, putting many thousand lives
 “ for his own wretched life. By forsaking things
 “ which Christ has bid his priests forsake, he
 “ might end all this strife. Why is not he a
 “ fiend, stained foul with homicide, who though
 “ a priest, fights in such a cause? If man-
 “ slaying in others be odious to God, much more
 “ in priests, who should be the vicars of Christ.
 “ And I am certain, that neither the pope, nor
 “ all the men of his council, can produce a spark
 “ of reason to prove that he should do this.”²⁸ To
 his flock at Lutterworth, he farther observes,
 “ Friars now say that bishops can fight best of all
 “ men, and that it falleth most properly to them,
 “ since they are lords of all this world. Thus,
 “ they say, Maccabeus fought, and Christ bade
 “ his disciples sell their coats, and buy them
 “ swords, but whereto, if not to fight? Thus friars
 “ make a great array, and stir up many men to

²⁸ MS. Codd. Ric. Jamesii, Bibl. Bodl.

“ fight. But Christ taught not his apostles to fight CHAP.
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 “ with a sword of iron, but with the sword of —
 “ God’s word, which standeth in meekness of
 “ heart, and in the prudence of man’s tongue.
 “ And as Christ was the meekest of men, so he
 “ was most drawn from the world, and would not
 “ judge or divide a heritage among men, and yet
 “ he could have done that best.” Such facts
 are said to deserve the attention “ of these two
 “ popes, when they fight one with the other,
 “ with the most blasphemous leasings that ever
 “ sprang out of hell. But they were occupied
 “ many years before in blasphemy, and in sinning
 “ against God and his church. And this made
 “ them to sin more, as an ambling blind horse,
 “ when he beginneth to stumble, lasteth in his
 “ stumbling, until he casts himself down.”²⁹

It thus appears that it was not merely the act of invasion, but the slaughter of men under any circumstances, which the reformer considered as opposed to the spirit and the letter of christianity. It is also evident, that he was aware of the opposition and contempt which the advocates of such opinions must encounter, so long as the state of the world should continue to be at all such as it had hitherto been. But the New Testament was before him, and that volume was understood as requiring that each professor of the gospel should adhere to such modes of resistance only as are there prescribed, or as occur in the recorded example of Christ, and of his apostles. Such, it was urged, is the pattern, and such are the commands of the Redeemer. His

²⁹ MS. Codd. Ric. Jamesii, Bibl. Bodl.

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injunctions in this particular were considered, moreover, as clearly expressive of his benevolence ; inasmuch as the evils to be anticipated from adhering to them, were believed to be trivial, when compared with those which had so commonly attended the schemes of conquest, vain-glory, and revenge. The malignant influence of the laws of retaliation had been long since ascertained, and the experiment of the effect to be produced by the pacific temper which the gospel enjoins, was said to have been successfully made in the early and better ages of the church. Men were therefore exhorted to renounce those brute methods of adjusting disputes, which had not only incurred the severest of their present privations, and inflicted the deepest of their present woes, but which had so often proved the grave of every virtue, and the parent of every crime. The disastrous influence of war on civilization, on literature, and liberty, the reformer could deplore ; but its demoralizing effects, and the desolation which it must forebode with respect to eternity, filled his mind with amazement and dismay.

Extracts
from Wy-
cliffe's later
sermons.

The passage last cited from the pen of the reformer, is from one in a series of sermons, delivered to the parishioners of Lutterworth subsequent to the opening of 1382. There is much in those compositions, serving to disclose the feeling and purpose of the preacher, at this important period of his history ; and as these productions have been hitherto unknown to the public, a few characteristic extracts will not perhaps be unacceptable to the reader. While so determined a foe to the practice of war, the conflict in aid of truth and

piety is one in which he would have all the capabilities of men employed, and of this he frequently speaks in such language as the following. “The captain of our battle is Christ, both God and man; who hath the lordship of all this world, being the Lord of lords. What good knight then should dread him to fight in the armies of this Lord? From the words of Paul it followeth, that he is of more power than all the fiends that are in hell, or aught that may oppose him. And since he overcame the fiend who is the head of the contrary battle, he hath virtue by his manhood to overcome all the enemies of his spiritual knights. In this, the knights of Christ’s battle should be comforted, so as to fight in his cause, and therefore Paul biddeth us take our arms in God’s name.”³⁰ Adverting to the promise of the Saviour, which affirms that his servant shall be there, both in bliss and place, where he is, without end,” it is observed that men should accordingly be prepared “to follow Christ, although it be hard.” The substance of his doctrine on this important branch of christian duty, is thus stated. “Certainly man should more love his soul than his body: and always should he most love God, and his law: and whoever so loveth these, is ready to suffer the death of his body, for the love of his God.”³¹

The lecture following that from which the last extract is taken, is said to teach “as the former doth, how a man should ordain himself to suffer martyrdom.” It relates chiefly to the text,

³⁰ MS. Codd. Ric. Jamesii, Bibl. Bodl. 109.

³¹ Ibid. 130.

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“Whosoever loseth his life, for my sake, and the
“gospel’s, shall save it;” and the preacher re-
marks, “since the life of man is ordained of
“God, evermore to be, it is not lost to God, but
“he for whom this life is lost keepeth it well, and
“giveth it him in bliss in the other world. And
“who would not thus traffic with his own life?”
To hesitate, is “to fail in charity, and in the first
“commandment,” and to make light of the pro-
mises which speak of the glorious things to be
accomplished in the saints, when their Lord shall
appear in his kingdom to beautify the bodies which
have been yielded as a sacrifice to him.³²

On another occasion he describes the gospel
for the day as “telling to the martyrs of Christ,
“what perils shall befall his house,” and the per-
secutions foretold as to come upon his disciples,
are said to be at present inflicted on good men.
“They shall put them into holds falsely, and
“shall punish them many ways. And often
“shall they draw them to kings, and to justices
“who are mighty in this world, and thus for
“Christ shall they be punished. And like to
“this falleth now, by the punishings of Anti-
“christ. But Jesus saith to his disciples, that
“it shall fall to them for a witness that they
“are on the true side. That they shall have a
“clear answer to give, which all their adver-
“saries shall not in any way withstand, and this
“shall be from the love of God coming so openly
“to them.” But this experience of the divine
approbation, is said to be unknown to the ruling
clergy, their propensities being, in general, too

³² MS. Codd. Ric. Jamesii, Bibl. Bodl.

earthly to allow of their cherishing the communications of heavenly wisdom. “If a prelate
 “feign that he hath power and wit given of God
 “to rule his church, and doth all amiss in such
 “things, following not God nor his law, certainly
 “such a hypocrite uttereth first a falsehood, and
 “by his treachery he leadeth the sheep of Christ
 “amiss. And though the wasting of God’s goods
 “be the worst of sins, because his goods are best,
 “yet men that should be martyrs, are so smitten
 “with cowardice, that they dare not speak a
 “word for right belief in this matter, but as
 “though men were beasts, do they constrain
 “them to assent to falsehood as true. Such are
 “many of the blasphemies and falsehoods in-
 “vented by popes and other prelates; and who-
 “ever in Christ opposeth them, he may be a
 “martyr if he dare. And better cause of mar-
 “tyrdom to God’s servants find we none. For as
 “the maintaining of faith is the cause of martyr-
 “dom, so the maintenance of things which are
 “not of faith should be reversed by christian
 “men, for else might all faith be changed, the
 “old put out, and new brought in. Thus they
 “say, that it is of faith that the pope is head of
 “holy church, and that whatsoever thing he
 “affects to do, is performed of Christ, but a more
 “perilous heresy was never feigned by the
 “fiend.”³³ In the sermon concluding thus, the
 doctrines of the pope’s supremacy and infallibi-
 lity, which are so strongly rejected, are noticed as
 forming the pressing questions of the orthodox.³⁴

³³ MS. Codd. Ric. Jamesii, Bibl. Bodl. 139.

³⁴ In another instance he thus complains of priests, as having taken away

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On the text, "Blessed are ye that weep now,
 " for you shall laugh," he thus writes ; " It is
 " known that whosoever truly loveth God's law,
 " must needs weep here over the enemies of
 " Christ. For these who are God's servants, will
 " be persecuted here for reprovng of sinners who
 " are God's enemies. But he is a coward against
 " God who speaketh not boldly against sin. And
 " therefore John the Baptist, and Christ's apo-
 " stles, took example of Christ, and thus they
 " wept always over sin. And since Christ in his
 " three weepings, wept for other men's sins, he
 " loveth not Christ and his mother well, who
 " sorroweth not for the injury and despite that
 " is done to them. But such as do this are men
 " of charity, and shall rejoice at the day of doom."
 The various sufferings which attended the pro-
 fession of a scriptural creed in the age of Wycliffe,
 are thus described. " Worldly men avoid such
 " professors, and leave them to themselves. They
 " are accursed of Antichrist; are put out of

the key of knowledge, and substituted
 their own tradition in the place of the
 scripture. " Since the kindred of the
 " fiend is now most among priests, as
 " it was in the time of Christ, true
 " men should speak to them sharply as
 " Christ did. For they have exiled
 " the law of God by which they should
 " work, and brought in the fiend's law
 " by which they now govern. Christ
 " often says how the lawyers watched
 " him, that they might take something
 " of his words to accuse him, and so
 " doom him to death, and thus did
 " those hypocrites pretend to fulfil the
 " law. And thus it is at this day
 " among these high-priests; for they
 " have new laws made beside God's
 " law, by which to doom men to death

" as open heretics. To this doing they
 " council not with God's law, but
 " with established heresies which
 " themselves hold, viz. that they may
 " not sin nor err in such judgments.
 " But all manner of men, who say that
 " they should follow Christ's life, and
 " leave their worldly life, they judge
 " for heretics. But if they thus give
 " themselves to lordships, forsaking
 " the life of Christ, they are fiend's
 " children and open antichrists. Christ's
 " children they may not be, but if they
 " follow him, and especially hold them-
 " selves in meekness and poverty.
 " And here we may know men whether
 " they dare be martyrs." MS. Codd.
 Ric. Jamesii, Bibl. Bodl. 145.

“ churches; and are parted in prisons from other CHAP.
“ men of the world; and in all these states they VII.
“ suffer reproofs. But if they are certain from
“ the matter of their belief, that in all this they
“ suffer for the cause of their God, they may be
“ blessed and joyful in hope of their end; even
“ as a sick man will gladly suffer pain, when
“ he hopeth thereby to come to health. And
“ the joy which saints have when they suffer thus,
“ is a manner of bliss which belongs to them
“ here, and it is more of joy to them than all
“ their worldly desires. Christ also telleth, that
“ those who stand in his cause, have their names
“ cast out as cursed men and heretics. So blind
“ are their enemies, and so deep in their sin, that
“ they call good evil, and evil good. But woe
“ be to such! And Christ biddeth his servants
“ rejoice in that day in their heart, and to shew
“ a glad countenance to men that be about them,
“ for certainly their mede is much in the king-
“ dom of heaven. And this word comforteth
“ simple men, who are called heretics, and ene-
“ mies to the church, because they tell the
“ law of God. For they are summoned and
“ reprovèd in many ways, and are after put in
“ prison, and burnt or killed, as though worse
“ than thieves. And the masters in this per-
“ secuting, are priests, high and low, and mostly
“ friars; as Christ was persecuted by Caiaphas,
“ and other priests, but especially by the pha-
“ risees. To all thus persecuted, this gospel is
“ a comfort, for as certainly as traditions made
“ beside the law of God, by priests, and scribes,
“ and pharisees, blinded them in that law, and

CHAP. VII. “made it despised—so it is now, by the new
 “laws of men called decretals and decrees—
 “but a remedy against this abuse, and one used
 “of many men, is to despise all such laws when
 “they are alleged; and to say unto men who
 “allege them, that their honesty is more sus-
 “pected for their citing of such laws, since
 “God’s law telleth all truth that is needful to
 “man.”³⁵

It is in the following language that the reformer expresses his confidence in the power of truth, and as to the issue of every conflict sustained in its cause. “Men should not fear,
 “except on account of sin, or the losing of virtues;
 “since pain is just, and according to the will of
 “God, and the truth is stronger than all their
 “enemies. Why then should men fear or sorrow
 “for it? The prophet bid his servant that he
 “should not fear, because many more were with
 “them than with the contrary part. Let a man
 “stand in virtue and truth, and all this world
 “overcometh him not; for if they overcome him
 “with these, then they overcome God and his
 “angels, and then they should make him to be
 “no God.—Thus good men are comforted to put
 “away fear, since be they never so few nor
 “feeble, they believe that they may not be dis-
 “comfited. Thus the words of Christ make his
 “knights to be hardy.”³⁶

One extract more, must suffice to exhibit the temper with which the reformer continued to the last to discharge his duties as a village teacher;

³⁵ MS. Codd. Ric. Jamesii, Bibl. Bodl. 136.

³⁶ MS. Codd. Ric. Jamesii, Bibl. Bodl. 166.

and the firmness, with which he constantly anticipated the infliction of the worst evils that his fidelity might be found to provoke. “ Know we
“ not, that Peter wist well how he should spend
“ God’s treasure, so as to profit his church?
“ Who dare then put on Peter the charge, that
“ he was negligent in this, that he spared that
“ treasure of God which popes now wisely dispense?
“ All men, therefore, but especially prelates, should oversee their state and their life,
“ whether it be according to God’s law, or after
“ the customs of the fiend. Such a reckoning
“ every man should make, every day of his life;
“ for this is a common word with many saints,
“ ‘ each time that God hath given thee, will he
“ ask full sharply as to how thou hast spent it,
“ whether well in his service or amiss.’ That
“ reckoning should each man fear; but especially
“ high-priests, for their office is more perilous.
“ And however men feign, their office is told in
“ the law of Christ, how they should be occupied
“ in three things as shepherds. They should
“ wisely lead their sheep into the sound pastures
“ of God’s law, and always put their own life
“ to save their sheep against wolves. And these
“ shepherds should not flee in the time when
“ thieves slay the sheep, nor covet more the wool
“ than they covet their soul’s health, for that is
“ the wolf’s intent. If it be thus they take the
“ office of shepherds, then are they wolves from
“ the beginning. It follows then, that the time
“ spent in labouring for high estate, for riches, or
“ any other than God’s worship for the profit of
“ their sheep, by the rules of God’s law, is time

CHAP. VII. "wasted." The preacher concludes a series of similar admonitions by observing, that "such oversight of our life, and especially of high prelates, helpeth the church, and maketh men to fear God, and serve him well." Wycliffe could not be insensible, while reiterating these severe maxims, that the strictest comparisons would be frequently made between his sentiments thus published, and his general conduct. In the case of such a man, the only conclusion to be fairly adopted is, that his daily practice was such as fully accorded with his public instructions.

We are now approaching the close of the reformer's history, and the passages from his writings which have occurred, must afford sufficient proof, that, as the evening of life was felt to be descending upon him, his devout anticipations of future blessedness, his zeal in the cause of christian reformation, and his feelings with regard to the sufferings which his persecutors might be allowed to inflict upon him, were all greatly purified and elevated. To oppose the errors which time, and custom, and law had established; and to publish aloud the truths contained in the christian scriptures; he affirms to be the imperative obligation of every christian man, and to be such notwithstanding the evils incurred should be scorn and poverty, imprisonment and death. The course of activity, which would assuredly bring these consequences along with it, is variously and minutely described; and is strictly that, which formed his own daily employment. The closing years of his life, accordingly, were passed in the strong expectation,

that the cell of the convict, if not the horrors of CHAP.
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the stake, would ere long be added to the contumely and poverty which he had already incurred. His auditors well knew, that no wrath could equal that which would be certainly excited, by his opposing the mass of those fictions in relation to the soul and the future, which had enabled the priesthood to attract to themselves their vast possessions, and their worldly dominion. Those fictions were nevertheless assailed, and the purposes to which they were applied, are described as those which could prove ensnaring only to the children of Antichrist. While nations are called upon to reject much of that spiritual authority which their religious guides had assumed; their rulers are urged, as they would escape at the day of doom, to divest that class of men of their needless wealth, and of that vain authority, which certain delusive tenets had enabled them to acquire, and which as certainly as the scriptures were true, must expose the blind and their leaders to the same pit of destruction. The language of his conduct, amid the growing power of his enemies, would seem to be, “To live, and to be silent, is, with me, impossible—the guilt of such treason against the Lord of heaven is more to be dreaded than many deaths. Let the blow therefore fall. Enough I know of the men whom I oppose, of the times on which I am thrown, and of the mysterious providence which relates to our sinful race, to believe that the stroke may ere long descend. But my purpose is unalterable. I wait its coming!”

The temper of his chief opponents was suf-

CHAP. VII. sufficiently known, to satisfy him that the continuance of his personal liberty, and even of his life, arose less from their inclination than from their weakness.³⁷ But his anticipations of a season, in which their power would be equal to their malice, were not to be realized. The fact admits of explanation. It was known, that the duke of Lancaster still entertained a favourable judgment of his character. The papal schism absorbed the attention of the pontiffs. And the domestic disquietudes in this country, had long rendered the factions who governed it fearful, in a great degree, of each other. In addition to these causes, as serving to delay the introduction of more sanguinary persecutions, the declining health of the reformer should be noticed. It was probable that his career would soon terminate: and with him, his partisans may have been expected to disappear. Previous to his death, he needed the assistance of a curate in performing his parochial duties. In this infirm state, however, he continued at times to officiate; and he is said to have been employed in administering the bread of the eucharist, when assailed by his last sickness. The paralysis which now seized his frame, deprived him at once of consciousness, and after an illness of a few days, issued in the removal of his devout spirit to the abode of natures more congenial with his own. This event happened on the last day of December, in the year

³⁷ MS. De Obedientia Prelatorum. In the Trialogus, Truth remarks that a great number of the religious, and of the people called christians, were ac-

customed to declaim against the doctrine of the reformer, "studying in "a thousand ways, to *deprive him of* "life." iv. c. 4.

1384.³⁸ Many good men have prayed to be called to their rest, while occupied in such services. We know not that it was so with Wycliffe: but we know that he was taken “from the evil to come.” It is not the province of the biographer to supply the deficiencies in his materials from the stores of his imagination, or we might dwell on the probabilities of the spectacle exhibited, in the death chamber, and the burial scene of such a man! We leave his enemies to indulge their feeling of triumph; and his followers to mourn a loss, which no second man was to supply. Some farther observations on the character of this much-injured confessor; and on the influence of his doctrine, with respect to the reformation of the sixteenth century, will be found in a subsequent chapter of this volume. But before proceeding to those topics, it will be proper to take a more complete, and a more connected view, of the opinions which he laboured to propagate.

³⁸ See the extract from the Bocking Register, Vol. I. 346, and Walsingham, Hypod. Neust. From Walsingham, and from the Teignmouth Chronicle, it appears that the attack of palsy took place on the 29th of the month — the festival of Thomas-à-Becket, and his death on the 31st, the day consecrated to the memory of

Silvester; and it is observed by Walsingham, that against both of these saints the reformer often directed his blasphemies. Of Silvester, however, he frequently spoke with respect; but the saintship of Becket he treated with contempt. Lewis, c. vii. Trial. iv. c. 17. Hom. Bib. Reg.

CHAPTER VIII.

On the Opinions of John Wycliffe, D. D.

DESIGN OF THE CHAPTER.—THE DOCTRINE OF WYCLIFFE RESPECTING THE POPE'S TEMPORAL POWER.—THE SECULAR EXEMPTIONS OF THE CLERGY.—THE GENERAL AUTHORITY OF THE MAGISTRATE.—THE LIMITS OF THAT AUTHORITY.—THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE MAGISTRATE WITH RESPECT TO THE CHURCH.—THE CUSTOMS OF PATRONAGE.—TITHES AND ECCLESIASTICAL ENDOWMENTS.—THE PRINCIPLES OF THE REFORMER'S THEORY DERIVED IN PART FROM THE EXISTING SYSTEM.—HIS REVERENCE FOR THE PRIESTLY OFFICE.—HIS JUDGMENT OF THE CONTEMPORARY PRIESTHOOD.—A SUMMARY OF HIS DOCTRINE RELATING TO THE CIVIL ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTIANITY AND CLERICAL REVENUE.—HIS OPINIONS RELATING TO SIMONY.—THE SPIRITUAL POWER OF THE POPE.—THE HIERARCHY.—THE RELIGIOUS ORDERS.—THE NATURE OF A CHRISTIAN CHURCH.—THE POWER OF THE KEYS.—PURGATORY AND MASSES FOR THE DEAD.—THE INVOCATION OF SAINTS.—THE WORSHIP OF IMAGES.—CONFESSION.—THE DOCTRINE OF INDULGENCES.—THE CELIBACY OF THE CLERGY.—THE SACRAMENTS.—TRANSUBSTANTIATION.—PUBLIC WORSHIP.—SUFFICIENCY OF THE SCRIPTURES, AND THE RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT.—A SUMMARY OF HIS THEOLOGICAL DOCTRINE.

CHAP. VIII. — MANY of the doctrines which distinguished the creed of Wycliffe, have been introduced in the preceding chapters, and in the order in which they appear in his writings. But in some instances, they have obtained a passing notice only; and in every case, they admit of a more complete illustration from the Wycliffe manuscripts, and of a more advantageous exhibition as connected with the reformer's general doctrine. There are

Design of
the chapter.

opinions, also, relating both to doctrine and discipline, which he laboured to disseminate, but which have not obtained any place in our narrative. CHAP.
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During the middle ages, the parties who were most offended by the false doctrines, or by the political usurpations of the papacy, and whose efforts were to issue in so great a diminution of its opulence and power, are found, in general, directing their first and most vigorous attacks against its latest corruptions. These could not be readily shielded by the plea of ancient custom. Forming also, as they did, the more recent measures of a power, which had long dispensed with the restraints of modesty in prosecuting its system of encroachment, they were commonly matters in which the want of reason was quite as obvious as the want of antiquity. Among the assumptions of this class, the doctrine of the pope's temporal power will claim our first attention. It is not surprising, that the modern catholic, whose creed has been so materially affected by the progress of society, should regret the prominence conferred by protestant historians on this tenet, as interwoven with the story of his church. The facts, however, with which it is connected, afford those illustrations of human character, and of the necessary tendencies of the system which produced them, that are too instructive to be wholly forgotten. The avowed successors of the Galilean fisherman, have gravely assumed an authority over all worlds; disposing at pleasure of the crowns and kingdoms of the present, and of the weal or woe of the future!

Doctrine of
Wycliffe on
the pope's
temporal
power.

CHAP. VIII. To prevent the return of any similar tyranny, it is important that this scheme of successful ambition should be frequently depicted in its native colours, and viewed in connexion with the principles which form its true source. In a sameness of circumstances, man has ever shown himself the same.

That every political government is, and ought to be, subject to the dominion of the spiritual church, is taught by Baronius as a verity that should never have been questioned. Nor is there any real difference between this opinion, and that expressed by Bellarmine, as the general doctrine of catholics in his day.¹ From Wycliffe's defence of the English parliament, in abolishing the census which had been extorted from king John, it appears, that previous to the year 1366, he had learnt to discard this preposterous claim as novel, fraudulent, and impious. It was in consequence of the pontiff's political interferences, founded on this doctrine, that he became, in the language of our reformer, "the evil man-slayer, poisoner, "and burner of the servants of Christ." Wycliffe complains indignantly of the men who profess to regard "this root of all the misgovernment in the church, as the head of holy church—"and as the most holy father, who may not sin." With equal regret he observes, "that if men "foolishly make a vow to go to Rome, Jerusalem, "or Canterbury, or on any other pilgrimage, that "they will value more than the great vow to keep "God's commandments, and to forsake the fiend "and all his works, which was made at their

¹ Apologia, c. 13. Barrow on the Pope's Supremacy, p. 6.

“ christening. And if a man break the highest
 “ commands of God, the rudest parish priest
 “ shall absolve him anon; but of the vows made
 “ from our own head, though many times against
 “ the will of God, no man shall absolve, except
 “ a great worldly bishop, or the most worldly
 “ priest of Rome! the master of the emperor!
 “ the fellow of God! the Deity on earth!” While
 the monarch of that worldly kingdom which had
 been introduced into the church was thus resisted
 and rebuked; it is in the following language, that
 the reformer adverts to the conduct of the men
 who were concerned, more or less, to perpetuate
 this degrading usurpation. “ Commonly, the new
 “ laws which the clergy have made, are cunningly
 “ devised to bring down the power of lords
 “ and kings which God ordained, and to make
 “ themselves lords, and to have all things at their
 “ doom. Certainly it seemeth, that these worldly
 “ prelates would more completely destroy the
 “ power of kings and lords, which God ordained
 “ for the government of christian men, than God
 “ destroyeth the power even of the fiend. For
 “ God, in setting a term which Satan may do,
 “ and no more, still suffereth his power to last,
 “ for the profit of christian men, and the just
 “ punishment of evil doers. But these worldly
 “ clerks would never cease, if unchecked, until
 “ they had destroyed kings and lords with their
 “ regalia and power.”²

It was not unusual, however, in the ages before
 Luther, for ecclesiastics who denied the authority
 of the popes as extending over the kingdoms of

On the
 secular ex-
 emptions of
 the clergy.

² MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. 3, 6, 11. See also Vol. I. Chap. ii.

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the world, to admit its validity as extended over the property of their own order. To escape the exactions of princes, churchmen had frequently ventured to plead this claim of their spiritual sovereign. But it was among the early doctrines of Wycliffe, that the authority of the magistrate should be final as to the wealth of the clergy, and as to the whole of their conduct, considered as members of society. “Worldly clerks and “feigned religious,” he observes, “break and “destroy the king’s peace and his realm. For “the prelates of this world, and the priests, high “and low, say freely, and write in their law, “that the king hath no jurisdiction nor power “over their persons, nor over the goods of holy “church. And yet Christ and his apostles were “most obedient to kings and lords, and taught “all men to be subject to them, and to serve “them truly and cheerfully in bodily works, and “to fear them, and honour them above all other “men. The wise king Solomon also, put down “a high bishop, who was unfaithful to him and “his kingdom, and exiled him, and ordained a “good priest in his room, as the book of Kings “telleth. And Jesus Christ paid tribute to the “emperor, and commanded men to pay him “tribute. St. Peter also commandeth christian “men to be subject to every ordinance of man, “whether unto the king as more high than others, “or unto dukes, as sent of him, to the vengeance “of evil doers, and the praising of good men. “Also St. Paul commandeth by the authority of “God that ‘every soul be subject to the higher “powers, for there is no power but of God.

“ Princes are not to the dread of good works, but CHAP.
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 “ of evil. Wilt thou not dread the power?—do ———
 “ good, and thou shalt have praise of the same,
 “ for he is God’s minister to thee for good. If
 “ thou hast done evil, assuredly thou shouldst
 “ fear, for he beareth not the sword in vain.
 “ Therefore ye must needs be subject, not only
 “ for wrath, but also for conscience. For there-
 “ fore ye give tribute, they being the ministers
 “ of God serving to this same thing. Therefore
 “ yield ye to all men’s debts, to whom tribute,
 “ tribute; to whom toll, toll; to whom dread,
 “ dread; to whom honour, honour.’ Our Sa-
 “ viour, Jesus Christ, meekly suffered a painful
 “ death under Pilate, not excusing himself from
 “ that jurisdiction, by virtue of his office. And
 “ St. Paul professed himself ready to suffer death,
 “ by the doom of the emperor’s justice, if he
 “ were worthy of death, as the deeds of the
 “ apostles teach. And Paul appealed to the
 “ heathen emperor, from the priests of the Jews,
 “ to be under his jurisdiction, and so to save his
 “ life.³ Lord, who hath made our worldly clergy
 “ exempt from the king’s jurisdiction, and chas-
 “ tening, since God hath given kings this office
 “ over all misdoers? Clerks, and particularly
 “ high-priests, should be most meek and obe-
 “ dient to the laws of this world, as were Christ
 “ and his apostles; and thus be a mirror to all
 “ men, that they may yield this meekness and
 “ obedience to the king, and to his righteous
 “ laws. What sturdy robbers and traitors then,

³ It was thus the reformer would vindicate his own appeal to the same authority. See Chap. iii. of this volume.

CHAP. VIII. “ are these to lords and kings in refusing this
 “ obedience, and in thus giving an example to
 “ all the men of the land to become rebels against
 “ the king and the lords. For in this, and in
 “ what they teach, they instruct the commons
 “ of the land, both in words and deeds, to be un-
 “ faithful and rebellious against the king. And
 “ this seemeth well, according to their new law
 “ of decretals, where proud clerks have ordained
 “ that our clergy shall pay no subsidy nor tax,
 “ nor any thing for the keeping of our king and
 “ our realm, without assent from the worldly
 “ priest of Rome. And yet many times this
 “ proud worldly priest is an enemy of our land,
 “ and secretly maintaining our enemies in war
 “ against us with our own gold. Thus an alien
 “ priest, and the proudest of all priests, they
 “ make the chief lord over the whole of the goods
 “ which clerks possess in this kingdom, and that
 “ is the greater part thereof. And where are
 “ there greater traitors, either to God, or holy
 “ church, and especially to our liege lord and his
 “ kingdom? An alien worldly priest, and an
 “ enemy to us, is made chief lord over the greater
 “ part of our country!”⁴

To this decisive passage, others of the same import, and equally bold in their character, might be added. In a subsequent chapter of the same work, the writer has supposed a number of extreme cases, with a view to exhibit more vividly the evils which must be inseparable from these clerical exemptions. Thus he remarks,—should churchmen refuse the payment of the most lawful

⁴ MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. 11.

debts, such is the nature of the immunities which they claim, that no lay authority would be left to enforce it. And were this privileged class of men to determine on conveying the whole of their wealth to another soil, the nation may do nothing to prevent a measure, which, if adopted, must reduce it to poverty. For the same reason, it is argued, were the clergy to conspire the death of the king, of the court, and of the nobility of the realm, neither the monarch, nor the aristocracy, might punish these daring delinquents with the smallest possible forfeiture of liberty or goods. To such uncourtly extremes, indeed, is the reformer carried by the warmth of his indignation, that he ventures to suppose the college of cardinals transformed into a regular banditti; and he enquires what the state of a people must be, who should be weak enough to believe that, to resist these holy depredators, must be to incur the guilt of sacrilege, and to sink into the lowest perdition!⁵

But the reformer is said to have taught a doctrine which has been sometimes designated, “dominion founded on grace.” This article of his creed was described as hostile to every social

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On the
general au-
thority of
the magis-
trate.

⁵ MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. 19. Dr. Lingard (Hist. iv. 262,) has cited the reformer's language in his Trialogus (iv. 18.) which expresses his doctrine respecting the duty of lords to deprive a church habitually delinquent of her possessions; and has quoted an extract from the passage, of which the substance is given in the text, as showing that the writer “afterwards attempted to explain it away.” But it remains to be

shown that “the Sentence of the Curse “Expounded” did not appear until *after* the Trialogus. It is certain that they were published so nearly together, that the priority of either can be of no moment. A few months only could have intervened. The passage, too, instead of being what Dr. Lingard insinuates, is one which, as the reader will perceive, presents the most vigorous enforcement of the obnoxious article intended.

CHAP. institution; and being in consequence suited to
VIII. ——— awaken the jealousy of the civil power, a cautious prominence was given to it by his enemies. Woodford, a well-known adversary of Wycliffe, laboured to make his refutation of this supposed heresy as formal and imposing as possible. Subsequently, the fathers of the council of Constance, in their great care to preserve the regal authority from injury, placed this dangerous tenet under their anathema; and the cardinal Bellarmine, moved by the same solicitude, assures the king of England, that the doctrine which sanctifies the murder of princes, and which the monarch had inadvertently imputed to catholics, is the property of the innovators, “certainly, of John “Wycliffe.” But with the consistency which usually attends the defence of a bad cause, the enemies of the reformer have been no less forward on other occasions, in charging him with making the most flattering appeals to the secular authorities, in hope of arraying them against the power and possessions of the priesthood. If this was his design, and he has scarcely a foe who does not impute it to him, it is needless to enquire whether he could, for a moment, have regarded it as expedient, to become the abettor of any doctrine unfriendly to the influence of the civil power. In the very consistent language of party zeal, the sword of the magistrate was at once his idol and his hatred; a weapon which at one moment he would extend far beyond the due sphere of its influence, and at another, consign to its scabbard, that every lawless passion might be loosened on the world. There are other facts,

also, which warrant a suspicion, as to the fidelity, or the correct information, of the persons who dwell with such marked interest on the pernicious tendencies of the doctrine adverted to. The authorities cited by Wycliffe, in support of this tenet, whatever it was, are St. Augustine and St. Bernard, — names, which have not often commended themselves to the agents of political discord. And it is no less remarkable, that amid the voluminous works of the reformer, one only has been cited as really containing this alarming dogma. In his English compositions — which were by far the greater number, and which were alone addressed to the people—it is not in more than two or three instances, that the remotest indication of it occurs. Yet from the period of his death, to the present hour, this obnoxious speculation has been described as the reformer's "favourite maxim."⁶ From this fact, the reader

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⁶ Such is Dr. Lingard's description of it. (Hist. iv.) The doctor also refers to the seventeenth chapter in the fourth book of the *Dialogus*, as containing this tenet. The passage in that chapter which relates to it, is given below, and it will not perhaps occur to the reader as very deeply charged either with theological or political heresy. "Titulo
" autem originalis justiciæ habuit Chris-
" tus omnia bona mundi, ut sepæ de-
" clarat Augusti, illo titulo, vel titulo
" gratiæ justorum sunt omnia, sed
" longe ab illo titulo civilis possessio.
" Unde Christus et sui Apostoli spreta
" dominatione civili, fuerunt de habi-
" tione pure: secundum illum titulum
" contentati. Ideo regula Christi est,
" que nullus suorum discipulorum pre-
" sumat protemporalibus suis conten-
" dere. Ut patet Mat. vi. qui aufert
" quæ tua sunt ne repetas. Sed longe

" sunt leges civilis et consuetudo do-
" minantium seculariter ab ista sen-
" tentia. Et hæc ratio quare leges
" istæ mundanæ et executio furiosa
" illarum: sunt tam culpabiliter etiam
" inter clericos introductæ. Et patet
" que conclusio quam inferis est con-
" cendenda, sed habitio distinguenda.
" Nam habere civiliter cum necessitat
" ad sollicitudinem circa temporalia et
" leges hominum observandus, debet
" omino clericis interdici. Et quan-
" tum ad Silvestrum et alios est mihi
" probabile, quæ in recipiendo taliter
" dotationem graviter peccaverunt.
" Sed possumus supponere que de hoc
" fructuose posterius pænitebant. Et
" sic concendo tibi que licet clericis
" habere temporalia, sed titulo et modo
" habendi quem deus instituit." p. 129.
From this passage it would appear
that such was the faith of Wycliffe

CHAP. will judge as to the force of that prejudice with
 VIII. which the memory of this man has been assailed.

It would not be difficult to collect a volume of extracts from the writings of Wycliffe, to demonstrate that no doctrine was embraced by him at all affecting the legal possession of property. He knew that many things might be lawful, as done by the Supreme Judge, which would be flagrant injustice, as performed by man, except in obedience to a mandate from that Judge. To illustrate his meaning, with respect to cases of the last description, he appeals to the conduct of the Israelites toward the nations of Canaan.⁷ This

with regard to the mediation of Christ, that he considered every man as indebted to the grace of the Redeemer for the benefits of this world, no less than for the hope of a better; and that accordingly he viewed the sin which incurred the forfeiture of heaven, as separating the offender at the same moment from all claim, with respect to God, as to the honours or possessions of the earth. Such is the theology of the scriptures. But it is insinuated, that the reformer proceeded from this general statement to infer, as a general consequence, that every such delinquent might be divested of property or office by the saints, as of things forfeited with respect to the supreme Lord. Could the rector of Lutterworth be shewn to have adopted such a conclusion, it must have been in some moment of derangement. We are not dependant, however, on such a supposition. When this scene of probation shall reach its close, it will appear that the doctrine of Wycliffe, however much despised or calumniated, is a momentous truth, and that no dominion can have the element of duration but what is founded in grace: And though it was not his manner to blend the re-

tributions of a future world with the arrangements peculiar to the present, he might deem it important to admonish the worldly and the powerful as to the ground on which the adjustments of that great crisis will take place; assuring them that the delay of those fearful decisions which will then be announced, arose less from any legal impediment, than from the long-suffering of God. The only notices, however, of this doctrine which I have met with in the reformer's writings are in his answer to the question of Richard's first parliament, (Vol. I. Chap. iv.) in one of his homilies, (Bib. Reg. 97,) and in his treatise on the Seven Deadly Sins. In the first instance it is applied to the office and possessions of the clergy only; in the second it is merely a passing observation; and in the last it will be remembered as introduced to discountenance, and not to encourage an invasion of the rights of others. See Chap. vii.

⁷ MS. on the Seven Deadly Sins. See Chap. vii. The additions which I have been able to make to what was previously known respecting this much controverted subject, consist in the important fact stated in the preceding

distinction, however, which was never absent from the reformer's mind, appears to have wholly escaped the discernment of his accusers. It is not to be denied that he regarded the churchman convicted of mortal sin as having forfeited his office. In every such case, he would have transferred the office so degraded, together with its jurisdiction and its revenue, to other and more worthy hands; and this maxim it was, which brought upon him the reproach of favouring a disruption of the social system.⁸ To save themselves from the consequences of such a doctrine, the clergy laboured to make it appear that the creed of their assailant teemed with revolutionary novelties, such as must apply to civil, no less than to ecclesiastical offices, and prove as perilous to the possessions of the laity, as to those of the church.

It is in the following language, that Wycliffe complains of the injury thus done to himself and his followers. "Prelates slander poor priests, "and other christian men, saying, they will not "obey their sovereigns, nor fear the curse, nor "keep the laws, but despise all things that are "not to their liking; and that they are, therefore, "worse than jews or pagans; and that all lords "and prelates, and mighty men should destroy "them, or else they will destroy holy church, "and make each man to live as him liketh, and "nothing may more destroy Christendom."⁹ In

note, and in a few extracts which are more explicit on the points at issue than any thing hitherto cited from the reformer's writings. It can, I trust, be no longer doubted that the opponents of Wycliffe attached a

meaning and an importance to this doctrine, which he had never himself attached to it.—Note to the second edition.

⁸ See Vol. I. Chap. iv. p. 361—365.

⁹ MS. De Obedientia Prelatorum.

CHAP. meeting these serious charges, it is admitted, that
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“ the fiend moveth some men to say, that christian men should not be servants nor vassals to heathen lords, since they are false to God, and less worthy than themselves. Neither should they be such to christian lords, since they are brethren in kind, (by nature) and Jesus Christ bought christian men on the cross, and made them free.” But it is observed, in reply, that “ the apostles Peter and Paul have written against this heresy in God’s law,” and their various lessons on obedience to magistrates are so explained, as to favour a submission which, if faulty at all, is so from excess. Conscious of injury, it is with becoming feeling he remarks, “ yet some men who are out of charity, slander poor priests with this error, namely, that servants or tenants may lawfully withhold rents and services from their lords, when lords are openly wicked in their living. And they invent this treacherous falsehood against poor priests, to make lords to hate them, and not to maintain that truth of God, which they teach openly for his honour, for the profit of the realm, for the establishing of the king’s power, and the destroying of sin.” He afterwards exposes the sophistry by which the enemies of the poor priests frequently succeeded in procuring a currency for this slander among the laity. “ The feigned reasoning of the clerks of Antichrist is this: if subjects may lawfully withhold tithes and offerings from curates who live in open lechery, or in other great sins, and do not the office—then servants and tenants may

“lawfully withdraw their service and rents from
“their lords, who live openly an accursed life.” CHAP.
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In answer to this, it is stated, “that men are
“charged of God, by St. Peter and St. Paul,
“to be thus subject to wicked lords; and there-
“fore Christ paid tribute for himself, and his
“apostles, to the heathen emperors. Yet we
“read not that he, or any apostle, paid tithes to
“the wicked high priests, after the time that
“he began to preach.”¹⁰

But while it is thus certain that no sanction of popular violence could be fairly extracted from the political creed of the reformer, he knew that the relation subsisting between the governing and the governed involved mutual obligations. Hence, as the governed are cautioned against the evils of insubordination, and restricted to the use of rational and constitutional means in seeking the redress of grievances; the governing are reminded, that they are the recognised ministers of God in the use, and not in the abuse of their power—the extent in which they prove a terror to evil doers, and a praise to those who do well,

On the li-
mits of ma-
gisterial
authority.

¹⁰ MS. Of Servants and Lords; how each should keep his degree. This treatise, and the Trialogus, appeared about the same time. The following passage is a fair specimen of the reformer's manner in treating of social obligations as devolving on the important class of persons to which it is chiefly addressed. “If thou art a labourer live in meekness, and truly and cheerfully do thy labour, that if thy lord or thy master be a heathen man, he, by thy meekness, and cheerful and true service, may have nought to grudge against thee, nor to slander thy God nor Christendom.

“And to a christian lord, serve not with grudging, nor only in his presence, but truly, and cheerfully, and in his absence. And not only for worldly dread, or worldly reward, but for the fear of God and conscience, and a reward in heaven. For that God who appointeth thee to such service, knoweth which state is best for thee, and will reward thee more than all other lords may do if thou doest thy service truly and cheerfully for the sake of his ordinance.” MS. A Short Rule of Life, &c.

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being that of their real claims on the homage of the people. He therefore proceeds so far as to assert, that while by the force of some human institution, the name of king, prince, or lord, may be retained in favour of men who indulge in “wrongs and extortions,” such rulers are, in truth, “traitors to God, and to his people.” In noticing “how lords should live in their state,” he remarks that “first, they should know the law “of God, and study it, and maintain it; that “they should despise injustice, and maintain “poor men in their right, to live in rest, and “peace, and charity; and that they should suffer “no man under colour of their authority to do “extortion, to strike men, or to hold the poor “from their right.”¹¹ Instead of abandoning themselves to sensual indulgence, they should be careful in their prosperity to emulate the patriarch, who could say, “when the ear heard me, then it “blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave “witness to me; because I delivered the poor “that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had “none to help him. The blessing of him that “was ready to perish came upon me, and I “caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy. I “was a father to the poor, and searched out the “cause that I knew not, and brake the jaws of “the wicked and drew the spoil from his teeth.”¹² In this manner “to withstand wrong and evil “doers, and to help the poor, and fatherless, and “motherless, and the widow, and the alien in “their lordship,” would be “to govern themselves in their state as God ordained it, in great

¹¹ MS. Of Servants and Lords.¹² Job, chap. xxix.

“wisdom, and in might of men, and sufficiency
 “of riches.”¹³ And as civil government was
 plainly instituted for these purposes, the magis-
 trate who shall contravene, or neglect them, is
 admonished that for this cause the providence of
 God will very probably transfer his power, and
 at no distant period, to hands of more fidelity.
 The point, indeed, at which the wrongs of tyranny
 may be innocently encountered by force, the re-
 former has not attempted to define. It was to
 imbibe the generous sentiments of much later
 times, to treat the duties of civil rulers as things
 which should be canvassed with the same freedom
 as those of the people; and to regard the delin-
 quencies of both as calling equally for reproof
 and correction.

But in the fourteenth century, the doctrine of
 Wycliffe as to the power of the magistrate with
 regard to the church, was a much greater novelty
 than any thing taught by him with respect to
 secular government. We have seen that he re-
 garded the clergy, as subject to the magistrate in
 every thing affecting the social interests of the
 laity; and that he considered the property of the
 church, as in no way at the disposal of the pon-
 tiff—but as held entirely of the crown, and as
 liable, at the will of the sovereign, to its share in
 the contributions required from the general re-
 sources of the state. This, however, was not the
 whole of the influence conceded by the reformer
 to the civil government, with reference to the
 national priesthood, and its vast possessions. To
 the state, Wycliffe appealed for protection from

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The obliga-
tions of the
magistrate
in relation
to the
church.

¹³ MS. Of good Preaching Priests.

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the persecutions to which he was exposed from the clergy. Despairing of such a change, as to emanate from that order, he insisted also that the labour of reforming the ecclesiastical establishment had become the duty of the magistrate. The ecclesiastics of the period are described as frequently “cursing the king, and his justices, “and officers, because they maintain the gospel, “and the true preachers thereof, and will not “punish them according to the wrongful commands of Antichrist and his clerks.” It is then inquired “Where are fouler heretics than these “worldly clerks, thus cursing true men, and “stirring up the king and his liege men to persecute Jesus Christ in his members, and to exile “the gospel out of our land?” “Sometimes,” he observes, “they succeed in persuading the king, “and lords, to torment the body of a just man, “over which Satan has no power, and to cast him “into a deep prison, as though he were some “sturdy thief, and all to make other men afraid “to stand forth on God’s part against their heresies.”¹⁴ Exposing the abuse of spiritual censures, he thus adverts to the oppressions of the times. “If a true man displease a worldly “prelate, by teaching and maintaining the law of “God, he shall be slandered as a man in error, “and forbidden to preach the gospel of Christ; “and the people shall be charged on pain of the “greater curse to avoid him, and not to hear “such a man. And this shall be done under “the colour of holiness. For they will say, that “such a man teacheth heresy, and they will

¹⁴ MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. xxiii.

“ bring many false witnesses and notaries in his
 “ absence, while in his presence they speak not a
 “ word. And for this they plead the false law,
 “ that if three or four witnesses, though false, and
 “ hired by money, say each a thing against a
 “ true man, then he shall not himself be heard,
 “ though he might prove the contrary by the wit-
 “ nessing of two or three hundred.”¹⁵ It is then
 contended, that if such evidence may be regarded
 as sufficient to justify the conduct of persecutors,
 it would be easy to establish the innocence of
 multitudes who have shed the blood of martyrs,
 and even to vindicate the conduct of the men who
 crucified the Saviour of the world. But while
 these proceedings could not fail to excite his
 sorrow and displeasure, he speaks of being sus-
 tained by a consciousness that as the voice of
 Elijah at length prevailed against that of eight
 hundred false priests of Baal, so should the testi-
 mony of one true man become triumphant over
 a host of Cesarean prelates. Still to the re-
 former it appeared as prudent, and just, that pro-
 tection should be sought in all cases of clerical
 persecution, from the bearer of the civil sword.
 From the equity of the state, it was accordingly
 solicited, “ that no priest, nor religious man in
 “ our land, should be imprisoned without an open
 “ trial, and true cause fully shewn to our king,
 “ or to his proper council—and that christian men
 “ give more credence to Christ’s gospel, and his
 “ life, than to any bulls of the sinful bishops of

¹⁵ MS. Of Prelates. This custom was founded on the maxims of the civil law. See Vol. I. Ch. i. p. 231, 232,

and Fortescue’s *De Laudibus*, with Selden’s notes.

CHAP. "this world."¹⁶ It is in the following language
 VIII. — that he contends for that liberty of prophesying,
 which has done so much for the institutions of
 this country, and the character of its people.
 "Worldly prelates command that no man should
 "preach the gospel, but according to their will
 "and limitation, and forbid men to hear the
 "gospel on pain of the great curse. But Satan,
 "in his own person, durst never do so much
 "despite to Christ and to his gospel, for he al-
 "leged holy writ in tempting Christ, and thereby
 "would have pursued his intent. And since it is
 "the counsel and commandment of Christ to
 "priests generally, that they preach the gospel,
 "and as this they must not do without leave of
 "prelates, who it may be are fiends of hell—it
 "follows that priests may not do the commands
 "of Christ, without the leave of fiends. Ah!
 "Lord Jesus, are these sinful fools, and in
 "some cases fiends of hell, more witty and
 "mighty than thou, that true men may not do
 "thy will, without authority from them? Ah!
 "Lord God Almighty, all wise, and all full of

¹⁶ MS. Of good Preaching Priests. Yet he remarks, "I would certainly
 "that lords should wisely imprison
 "those who are cursed of God for
 "breaking his commandments, unless
 "they would leave their false and
 "needless swearing, and the frauds
 "which they use each to the other."
 MS. Sentence of the Curse Ex-
 pounded, c. 23. The twelfth chapter
 of his work, on Prelates, censures the
 conduct of bishops who fine, curse,
 and imprison men on account of reli-
 gion, while they pardon the most noto-
 rious offenders on condition of their
 "paying a rent to Antichrist." Coer-

cion, it is observed, belongs to "lords"
 "office, as Peter and Paul teacheth,"
 and it is contended that the punish-
 ments affecting the body or the goods
 should proceed from that authority
 alone. In the fifteenth chapter of the
 same work he complains that the pro-
 cess of examination to which the Re-
 deemer "God and man," and Paul
 "from the third heavens," submitted
 their doctrine, is abandoned by their
 professed disciples, who deem it suffi-
 cient to plead the infallibility of their
 church, and who persecute such as
 dissent from that dogma, and question
 the opinions it is cited to establish.

“ charity, how long wilt thou suffer these Anti-
 “ christes to despise thee, and thy holy gospel, and
 “ to prevent the health of the souls of christian
 “ men? Lord of endless righteousness, this thou
 “ sufferest, because of sin generally reigning
 “ among the people; but of thine endless mercy
 “ and goodness, help thy poor wretched priests
 “ and servants, that they possess the love and
 “ reverence of thy gospel, and be not hindered to
 “ do thy worship and will by the false feignings of
 “ Antichrist. Almighty Lord God, most merciful,
 “ and in wisdom boundless, since thou sufferedst
 “ Peter and all apostles to have so great fear and
 “ cowardice at the time of thy passion, that they
 “ flew all away for dread of death, and for a poor
 “ woman’s voice; and since afterwards, by the
 “ comfort of the Holy Ghost, thou madest them
 “ so strong that they were afraid of no man, nor
 “ of pain, nor death; help now, by gifts of the
 “ same Spirit, thy poor servants, who all their life
 “ have been cowards, and make them strong, and
 “ bold in thy cause, to maintain the gospel against
 “ Antichrist, and the tyrants of this world.”¹⁷

With so much energy, and with these devout aspirations, did the reformer contend for the unfettered ministration of the gospel. Nor is there room to charge him with claiming a freedom in this particular, which he would not have conceded to others. His invectives, indeed, are often violent; but when recommending his most severe chastisement of the men who had done most to destroy the purity of the christian faith, the clause

¹⁷ MS. Of Prelates, c. vii. p. 77. especially in xv. xvi. xxi. xxvi. xxvii. xxviii. See also Homilies, Bib. Reg. pp. 129, 137, 138. Similar sentiments are expressed in several other chapters of this work,

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“sparing their persons,” is of very frequent occurrence.¹⁸ On this point, as on many others, his opinions belong not to the age in which he lived. To attempt the conversion of a spiritual offender, by the same measures which heathens employ to correct their thieves, is condemned by him as equally opposed to sound reason, and to the letter and spirit of the gospel. Hence, the extent of the reformation which he proposed, in this respect, was “that none of the clergy be hindered from keeping truly and freely the gospel of Christ, in devout living, and true teaching, on account of any feigned privilege or tradition;”¹⁹ and also that the revenues of that order should be limited to the means of a decent maintenance, and to such persons among them, as were free from the vices by which the sanctity of their profession had been so commonly degraded.

To extend this protection to devout men, and to effect this momentous revolution with respect to the property of the hierarchy, and the character of its ministers, is declared to be the province of the magistrate. To neglect this great work, under existing circumstances, must be at the peril of his soul. “Think ye, lords, and mighty men, who support priests, how fearful it is to maintain worldly priests in their lusts, who neither know good nor will learn it, nor will live as holy men in this order. For ye may lightly amend them, by only telling them that ye will not support them but as they do their duty, live well, and preach the gospel. Then, indeed, they would certainly do this. And think ye,

¹⁸ Hom. Bib. Reg. pp. 103, 114.
Objections to Freres. Ad Regem et

Parliamentum, and elsewhere.

¹⁹ MS. Of good Preaching Priests.

“ great men, were not this a thousand-fold better, CHAP.
 “ than to conquer all the world? Hereby there VIII.
 “ should be no more cost to you, nor travail, but
 “ honour to God, and endless good to yourselves,
 “ to priests, and to all Christendom. God for his
 “ endless mercy, and charity, bring this holy end,
 “ Amen.”²⁰ In another tract he writes, “ Kings
 “ and lords should know, that they are ministers
 “ and vicars of God, to avenge sin, and punish
 “ misdoers, and to praise the good, as Peter and
 “ Paul say. Also Paul saith, that not only men
 “ who do sin are worthy of death, but they who
 “ consent to it. Since lords, then, may amend
 “ the great sins of pride, covetousness, extortion,
 “ and simony among clerks, they are condemned
 “ with the sinners themselves unless they do it—
 “ cursed of God for breaking of his laws, and
 “ because they love not Jesus Christ. And be-
 “ cause adversities and wars come on account of
 “ sins reigning, and not amended, lords should
 “ have neither respite, nor peace, until these sins
 “ are done away. For no man thus withstanding
 “ the law of God shall have peace so long as
 “ lords have their lordships of God, to destroy
 “ sin, and to maintain righteousness and holiness
 “ of life. If then, they pay not to God this rent,
 “ well should they know, that God must punish
 “ them as he teacheth in his word. And if lords
 “ do well this office, they come securely to the
 “ bliss of heaven.”²¹

²⁰ MS. For the Order of Priesthood.

²¹ MS. For three Skills Lords should constrain Priests, &c. That Wycliffe was a zealous advocate of the rights of the crown, as opposed to all secular

independence in the clergy, has been always sufficiently understood. But the real extent of the magistrates' obligations with regard to the church, and especially with regard to the

CHAP.
VIII.On the cus-
tom of pa-
tronage.

It was not, however, the intention of the reformer, that the rights of patronage should be invaded by the state, any more than by the court of Rome; though from the thirtieth year of his age, he ceased not to complain of the worldly purposes to which patrons had too commonly applied their influence. In one of his later treatises he observes, that an idiot is often called to be “a vicar, or parish priest, who cannot do, “and who may not learn to do, the office of a “good curate. Yet the poor parish provideth “for him, and no tongue in this world may tell “what sin and wrong cometh hereby.” The rulers of the nation, and the patrons of livings, are accordingly exhorted, if they would perform their duty as guardians of the best interests of the kingdom, to separate all churchmen from worldly offices, and from the snares of wealth. “By this means the poor commons would be “discharged of many heavy rents, and wicked “customs, brought in by covetous clerks, and of “many tallages and extortions, by which they “are now yearly pillaged. And thus by restoring “lordships to secular men, as is due by holy “writ; and by reducing the clergy to meekness “and wilful poverty, and ghostly travail, as lived “Christ and his apostles, sin should be destroyed

patronage or the correction of religious opinion, are points on which the sentiments of the reformer remained to be known. It is evident, that if his scheme did not leave all such opinions to find their level by the force of pure reason and persuasion, it did more in this way, than the practice of any of the parties ascendant in this country before the latter half of the seventeenth

century. Even the mendicants, whose character and doctrine, according to his own account, could hardly have become worse, were not to suffer in “their persons.” His confidence in the force of truth, evidently rendered him suspicious as to the utility of all other force in religious matters. Note to the second edition.

“ in each degree of holy church, and holiness of
 “ life brought in, and secular laws strengthened, CHAP.
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 “ and the poor commons aided, and good govern-
 “ ment, both spiritual and temporal, come again.”
 To guard the mind of the laity against those spi-
 ritual terrors, which would certainly be employed
 to prevent these changes, he observes, that the
 more informed among them knew, “ that though
 “ all the clergy on earth should curse them, yet,
 “ forasmuch as they labour with a clean con-
 “ science, to bring the clergy to that holy life
 “ which is exemplified and commanded by Christ;
 “ and to restore secular lordships to secular men,
 “ as they should by the law of God; that for this
 “ righteous doing, God and all angels and saints
 “ will bless them. And then the curse of man
 “ can harm nothing, no, nor interdict, nor any
 “ censure which Satan may feign. Almighty
 “ God, stir our clerks, our lords, and our com-
 “ mons, to maintain the rightful ordinance of
 “ Jesus Christ, and to fear the curse of God, and
 “ not the curse of Antichrist; and to desire
 “ speedily the honour of God, and the bliss of
 “ heaven, more than their own honour and
 “ worldly joy. Amen!”²²

²² MS. For three Skills Lords should constrain Priests, &c. The guilt of spiritual treason is said to be incurred by lords and ladies who hold curates in worldly offices from the souls of which they have the care. For God giveth them lordship and presentation of churches, to maintain his law, and to help true priests in the preaching of the gospel. And if they withhold curates, who are God's treasure, in their worldly service, or in their chapels, or prevent

“ their watching over christian souls, “ which Christ bought with his own “ precious blood, they are foul traitors “ to Jesus Christ, and to the people “ whom they thus destroy.” MS. Of Prelates, chap. iv. The doctrine of Wycliffe with respect to patronage may have been inferred from his work intitled “ Why poor Priests have no “ Benefices,” and from a few other passages; but if any effort has been made to ascertain his general language on this point, the result has never been

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VIII.

On the cus-
tom of tithes
and the ef-
fect of eccle-
siastical en-
dowments.

It should be noticed also, as a circumstance which has exposed the name of the reformer to some reproach, that he ventured to speak even of tithes, as a mode of contribution for which no divine authority could now be pleaded. That sanction, it was acknowledged, had been connected with this custom under the Mosaic economy; but it was assumed, that both the ritual and the polity of that dispensation had passed away, leaving "its moral" only, as binding on the church in these better times. So often too had his spirit been grieved on witnessing the force employed through a parish or a province, to enrich a profligate clergy, that while inculcating most emphatically the duty of the instructed to provide for their spiritual teachers, he was ever ready to avow it as his doctrine, that where the priest failed notoriously in his office, the obligation to any kind of contribution on the part of the people was dissolved. In such cases, the clergy might resort to spiritual censures, or enforce their demands by the aids of the civil power; but in so doing, they were said to follow the customs of the world, more than the example of Christ, or the maxims of the gospel. The third chapter of his treatise on "Clerks-Possessioners," is commenced by describing the persons so named, as "traitors to God, to lords, and to the common people." To the first, by deserting his law in favour of human devices; to the second, by

publicly stated. This was important to be done, not only because the reformer abandoned many of his earlier opinions at the close of life, but because he certainly adopted some

notions on the matter of clerical revenue, which, if they did not go to destroy the system of patronage, went necessarily to effect a serious modification of it. Note to the second edition.

placing them under an anathema except they ^{CHAP. VIII.} forego their duty, and become the patrons of corruption; and to the third, by deceiving them in many ways, but especially by “teaching them “openly that they shall have God’s blessing, and “the bliss of heaven, if they pay truly their “tithes and offerings.”²³ To destroy this artifice, which he knew to be too successfully imposed on the people, the reformer thus writes: “True, “men say, that prelates are more bound to “preach truly the gospel, than their subjects are “to pay them dymes; for God chargeth that “more, and it is more profitable to both parties. “Prelates, therefore, are more accursed who “cease from this preaching, than are their sub- “jects who cease to pay tithes even while their “prelates do their office well.”²⁴ Instead of extorting such tribute from the poor among the people, their influence should be employed in promoting their edification, and in disposing the opulent and the powerful to befriend them. Such, it is stated, was the manner of St. Paul. And those who “find priests” are farther exhorted “to do their alms for the love of God, and for “the help of their souls, and for the help of chris- “tian men.” They are also admonished, that in providing for men averse to these spiritual services, they must become partakers of their sins.”²⁵ Nor need they fear the consequences of withholding their sanction from the character of such teachers, since the pontiff had himself commanded the people to separate from a priest

²³ MS. C.C.C. Cambridge.²⁵ MS. How Men should find Priests.²⁴ MS. Of Prelates.

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who should refuse to put away a wedded wife; and it surely was not to be disputed, that there were sins quite as much at variance with the sanctity of the priestly calling, as the contract of marriage.²⁶ Hence it is required, "that the clergy of our land be restrained from pride, and glorious array, and worldly occupation. And particularly, that our prelates and curates be charged by the king and lords to teach their people well, both by the example of a good life, and by a free and true preaching of the gospel, and that they do this as busily and readily as they seek their tithes."²⁷ It is presumed, that in such cases no difficulty would be felt in securing that portion of tribute. The times were evil, but we must suppose that observation and experience had led the reformer to this conclusion.²⁸ Where the moral claim failed through vice or negligence on the part of the priest, an appeal to the sword of the magistrate, "and strong curses against men's good will," is said to have no other tendency than to irritate the laity, and to frustrate every design of the pastoral relation. Such measures were viewed as effacing the im-

²⁶ MS. How Prayers of good Men helpeth much, &c. &c.

²⁷ MS. Of good Preaching Priests.

²⁸ His doctrine with respect to ecclesiastical endowments and tithes, is introduced in his sermons quite as frequently as in his other works. See 102, 125, 134. "And therefore say many prelates, that no man who hath a cure, should live but on God's part, as on dymes and offerings; and so by pure title of alms should they have the goods which they have. For thus lived Christ the

"highest pope. And who art thou that wilt not live thus? Wouldst thou be greater than Christ who is Lord of all the world?" Such offerings, however, on the part of the people, are said to be as binding as any other form of debt. It is at the same time demanded, "For what reason should he have dymes and offerings of the people who liveth in lust and idleness and profiteth not to his people? Certainly such law must be of the fiend." Ibid. 156.

portant difference which had been placed between the authority of the magistrate and that pertaining to the christian shepherd. According to “reason and scripture” the former might thus enforce his decisions; “but by the gospel, and “the life of Christ, and of his apostles, priests “have no such power to constrain men to pay “their dymes. Especially, while they do not “their spiritual office, but harm men by false “teaching and evil example. But even though “they did their office well, and men would “not pay them tithes, still they should not curse “men, but rather suffer meekly as did Jesus “Christ.”²⁹

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The following passage presents a fair specimen of his frequent reasoning on this subject. “Men “wonder greatly why curates are so unfeeling “to the people in taking tithes, since Christ “and his apostles took none, as men now take “them, neither paid them, nor spake of them “either in the gospel or in the epistles—the perfect law of freedom and of grace. But Christ “lived on the alms of Mary Magdalene, and of “other holy women, as the gospel telleth. And “apostles lived sometimes by the labour of their “hands, and sometimes accepted a poor livelihood and clothing, given by the people in free

²⁹ MS. How religious Men should keep certain Articles. In a MS. of the Bodleian entitled *Vita Sacerdotum*, “the foul indowing of the church” is described as having “always harmed “clerks and lords and commons.” It is contended that the taught should minister freely to every real need of their instructors, but it is observed that “when the apostles strove which

“should be greatest, Christ of his “great wisdom declared his doubt, “and said there are two lordships, “temporal, and spiritual. The first “falls to the kings and lords of this “world, and in no way to priests, who “are on Christ’s side.” This is also the substance of the seventeenth chapter in the fourth book of his *Triologus*.

CHAP. VIII. " will and devotion, without asking or con-
 straining. And to this end Christ said to his
 " disciples, that they should eat and drink such
 " things as were set before them, and take nei-
 " ther gold nor silver for their preaching, or their
 " giving of sacraments. And Paul giving a ge-
 " neral rule for priests, saith thus; ' We having
 " food and clothing, with these things be we
 " content in Christ Jesus.' Paul also proved
 " that priests who preach the gospel truly, should
 " live by the gospel, and of tithes he said no
 " more. True, it is, that tithes were due to
 " priests and deacons in the old law; and so
 " bodily circumcision was then needful to all
 " men, but it is not so now, under the law of
 " grace. Christ, however, was circumcised, and
 " yet we read not where he took tithes as we
 " do; nor do we read in all the gospels, that
 " he paid them to the high - priest, or bade
 " any other man to do so. Lord, why should
 " our worldly clergy claim tithes and offerings
 " and customs from christian people more than
 " did Christ and his apostles, and even more than
 " men were burdened with under the law?
 " Then, all priests, and deacons, and officers of
 " the temple were maintained by tithes and
 " offerings alone, having no other lordship. But
 " now some worldly priest, who is more un-
 " able than others, by virtue of a bull of Anti-
 " christ, shall have all the tithes and offerings
 " to himself."³⁰

The readiness with which churchmen appealed to the Old Testament, to prove the divine origin

³⁰ MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. xviii.

of tithes, was frequently thus retorted upon them by our reformer. If the authority of the levitical law might be justly pleaded, as vesting them with their claim to a tenth of whatever the soil produced; consistency required, that the estates and the worldly offices of the clergy should be wholly relinquished, since these were things that could not be associated with the priestly character as sustained by the descendants of Levi. In the same spirit, it is remarked, that “they
 “ take not tithes and offerings by the form of
 “ the Old Testament; that is, parting them in
 “ common to all the priests and ministers of the
 “ church. Nor according to the form of the gos-
 “ pel; that is, taking a simple livelihood, given
 “ without compulsion, by the free devotion of the
 “ people; but they take them according to a new
 “ law of sinful men, one priest challenging to
 “ himself all the tithes of a great country.”³¹
 The diversity of customs, also, which prevailed in connexion with this mode of providing for the ministers of religion, was supposed to imply the want of some definite or authoritative law. If tithes were due, he observes, “by God’s com-
 “ mandment, then every where in Christendom,
 “ there should be one mode of tithing.”³² Thus

³¹ MS. How the Office of Curates is ordained of God.

³² MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. xviii. The reader will perceive from the following extract, that the change which the reformer contemplated in the ecclesiastical state, though affirmed to be necessary, was one which he would have to result from the gravest attention to the many questions which it involved. “Would

“ God,” he exclaims, “that all wise
 “ and true men would enquire whether
 “ it were not better for to find priests
 “ by the free alms of the people, and
 “ in a reasonable livelihood, that they
 “ may teach the gospel in word and
 “ deed, as did Christ and his apostles,
 “ than thus to pay tithes as men are
 “ now constrained by a new ordinance
 “ of priests, to a worldly priesthood,
 “ ignorant and negligent.” He pre-

CHAP. the estates of the clergy, the reformer would
 VIII. have restored to the hands of the laity, as the means of promoting the general interests of the community, and especially of providing for the poor. The contributions by the people to the clergy, he would have limited to voluntary offerings, so restricting that order in the use even of such offerings, that whatever might remain after their real wants should be supplied, might minister to the relief of the necessitous in their respective flocks.³³

sently adds, that "if this first ordinance of Christ and his apostles come again to Christendom, then shall Christ's people be free to withhold their tithes and offerings from wayward priests, and no more maintain them in sin." To be thus free, and yet to provide "a reasonable livelihood for good priests, were much better and easier, both for priests and commoners, for this world and the next." Ibid.

³³ Mr. Lewis is evidently much perplexed with this part of Wycliffe's doctrine, and has so treated it that it is difficult to learn from his pages, what the reformer really taught concerning church revenue, or what his biographer considered him as teaching. Wycliffe's enemies charge him with asserting, that "it is not lawful for priests to have any *property*," and that tithes moreover are "mere *alms*, and ought to be paid to none but those who teach and do their office." Mr. Lewis applies himself to account for these calumnies, and to refute them. But understanding the word *property*, as I presume we ought to do, as meaning estates possessed by the clergy as such; and by the word *alms*, voluntary contributions, as opposed to an extorted revenue, these accusations are certainly true, and are rather con-

firmed than confuted by the passages which his biographer has adduced from his writings. Mr. Lewis has quoted Cowell's Interpreter, a work founded on the worst principles of the civil law, as showing that all the property of the realm belongs to the king, and from this legal fiction he has descended to infer that Wycliffe might have said in truth, that the clergy ought not to have any property! In fact, Mr. Lewis's whole manner of treating this subject is unworthy of his general candour, and if it does not amount to a concealment of the truth, it is certainly very like that of a man who is concerned to soften it. He certainly does not state the true doctrine of the reformer. Whether this resulted from his not knowing it, or from his suppressing it, or in some degree from both these causes, I presume not to judge. He concludes with affirming, that Wycliffe never taught that tithes might "be detained by the parishioners, and bestowed where they will at their pleasure," adding that this liberty was restricted "to cases limited by law." But if by bestowing tithes according to their *pleasure*, be meant bestowing them according to their *conscience*, which no doubt is the thing intended, the statement is untrue. And if by cases

And novel as these opinions may appear on the first view of them, it was not in the strictest consistency that they were denounced either as erroneous or heretical by the partisans of Rome. For what were the maxims which had conferred so much honour on the monastic and mendicant fraternities? Were they not those which regarded seclusion from worldly occupation, and separation from luxurious opulence, as a species of discipline eminently favourable to the increase of devotion? The law of celibacy had contributed much to augment the influence of the more ancient clergy, by exhibiting them as an order of men more self-denying, and more devoted than the laity; and it is well known, that the religious had long rendered themselves the object of a much deeper veneration, by connecting with that article of restraint, their vows of peculiar poverty, and of separation from the vain and distracting employments which relate to this world. The principle involved in all this, did not escape the reformer's observation; and in his case, it was not enough to applaud the sanctity of such rules, merely as exemplified in others. He ventured to call on the members of that order with which he stood immediately connected, even on the most dignified among them, to show their sincerity, by conforming themselves at once to the requirements of a scheme which they professed so greatly to admire. By

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The principle of the reformer's theory derived in part from the existing system.

limited by law he meant such cases only as are limited by the law of the church, or by the law of the land, this statement is equally incorrect. The reformer not only taught that there was an authority in "the law of Christ"

with respect to such matters, but that the authority of that law was supreme. He may not have judged wisely in this, but such was his doctrine.—Note to the second edition.

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— associating something of the severity of the cloister with their own vocation, the uses of the religious in the ecclesiastical state would be superseded, and all the reputation which had been obtained by such men, might be thus thrown into the scale of the parochial priesthood. Such is the bold theory to which the reformer challenged the attention of all churchmen, and of the rulers of Christendom. Its language was simply this. It is affirmed, that to reduce the clergy to that state with respect to property, which in the age of the apostles was never felt as a disgrace; and that to exclude them from all secular offices, though sanctioned by the same example; would be to annihilate their influence, and so to bring upon the world the last of evils. But let it be remembered by the persons who reason thus, that they have long agreed to render their most profound homage to the men who are distinguished by their professed adherence to these primitive models of devotedness. Nothing is now required, save that the maxims which these same persons have so variously declared to have most of heaven in them, and which they know to be favourable to the greatest influence on earth, be allowed to form their own character, and to regulate their own conduct. Let them connect a poverty less equivocal than that of the mendicant, and a spirituality less suspicious than that of the monk, with a zealous discharge of their proper duties, and the only result to be anticipated, is the exclusion of those intruders from the established system, and the return of their own order to that kind of ascendancy, which

was the beauty of the primitive church, and was then found to be fraught with every blessing to the shepherd and the flock. CHAP. VIII.

The wisdom or the folly of this doctrine, and of the reasoning employed to sustain it, is left to the judgment of the reader; but integrity requires that both should be here distinctly stated. It is certain that the changes thus urged, were by no means the consequence of a defective reverence for the clerical office. In the language of Wycliffe, “ Good priests, who live well, in purity
“ of thought, and speech, and deed, and in good
“ example to the people, who teach the law of
“ God up to their knowledge, and labour fast,
“ night and day, to learn it better, and teach it
“ openly and constantly, these are very prophets
“ of God, and holy angels of God, and the spi-
“ ritual lights of the world! Thus saith God,
“ by his prophets, and Jesus Christ in his gos-
“ pel, and saints declare it well, by authority
“ and reason. Think then, ye priests, on this
“ noble office, and honour it, and do it cheer-
“ fully, according to your knowledge, and your
“ power!”³⁴

But in the place of such men, he saw a multitude who, while professing to be the ministers of the Saviour’s spiritual kingdom, possessed half the property of the realm; and who, in proportion to their wealth, were found to operate as the chief barrier in the way of every attempt to restore religion to its purity. These persons are described as “ more busy about worldly goods,
“ than about virtues, and the good keeping of the

³⁴ MS. For the Order of Priesthood.

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“souls of men. For he who can best get the
“riches of the world together, and hold a great
“household and worldly array, is deemed a wor-
“thy man of holy church, though of the gospel
“he shall not know the least point. Such a man
“shall be full in favour and office with the bishop.
“But that curate who giveth himself to study
“holy writ, and to teach his parishioners to save
“their souls, and who liveth in meekness and
“penance, and busy travailling in spiritual things,
“seeking nought of worldly worship or riches;
“is holden a fool, and a disturber of holy church,
“and is despised and persecuted of high-priests
“and prelates, and their officers, and hated by
“other curates in the country. It is this, too,
“that maketh many curates to be negligent in
“their ghostly charge, and to give themselves to
“the occupation and the business of the world.
“But such curates think full little how dearly
“Christ bought man’s soul with his own pre-
“cious blood and death, and how hard a reckon-
“ing he shall make for these souls at doomsday.
“Certainly it seemeth that they are out of the
“faith of christian men. For they make not
“themselves ready to come, and well to answer
“how they came into their benefices, and how
“they have lived and taught, and how they have
“spent the goods of poor men. Had they a
“christian man’s faith ready in their mind, they
“would begin a better life, and therein con-
“tinue.”³⁵ Thus, while the guilt of the laity, in
favouring the corruptions of the hierarchy, or in
allowing them to exist, is described as exposing

³⁵ MS. How the Office of Curates is ordained of God.

them to the displeasure of Heaven, their offence CHAP.
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is regarded as trivial, when compared with that of
the clergy. That body of men, in submitting to
become thus estranged from the spiritualities of
their office, and in contributing by their example
to diffuse impiety, and all the elements of poli-
tical disorder, through the nation, are loudly
admonished, that the alternative immediately be-
fore them is reform or ruin. The remedy which
Wycliffe proposed, we have seen; and the facts
to which he adverts, will serve to explain the se-
verity that marks certain of its features.

Those who despise the will of the dead, are
said to be “cursed solemnly of God and man.”
But Jesus Christ, in his testament, bequeathed
to his disciples, and their successors, peace in
“themselves, and in this world tribulation, and
“persecution for his word. But worldly clerks
“have foully broken this good testament of
“Jesus Christ. For they seek the peace and
“the prosperity of this world; peace with the
“fiend and with the flesh, and will endure no
“labour in keeping or teaching the truth of God;
“but rather persecute good men who would
“teach it, and so make war upon Christ in his
“people to obtain the worldly things which
“Christ forbid to their order. In the life of
“Christ in his gospel, which is his testament, in
“the life also and teaching of his apostles, our
“clerks may find nothing but poverty, meekness,
“ghostly toil, and contempt from worldly men
“on account of reproving their sin, their reward
“being in heaven, through their pure life, and
“true teaching, and cheerful suffering of death.

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— — —

“ Hence Jesus Christ was so poor in this life,
 “ that by worldly title he had no house to rest
 “ his head, as he himself saith in the gospel.
 “ And St. Peter was so poor that he had neither
 “ silver nor gold to give a poor crippled man, as
 “ is witnessed in the book of the apostles’ deeds.
 “ St. Paul, also, was so poor in this world’s
 “ goods, that he laboured with his hands for a
 “ livelihood, and that of his fellows, and suffered
 “ much persecution, and watchfulness, and great
 “ thought for all the churches, as he himself
 “ saith in many places of holy writ. And St.
 “ Bernard writeth to the pope, that in his worldly
 “ array, and plenty of gold and silver, and lands,
 “ he is a successor of Constantine the emperor,
 “ and not of Jesus Christ, and his disciples.
 “ Jesus also saith, on confirming this testament,
 “ after rising from the dead, ‘ As my Father hath
 “ sent me, so I send you,’ that is, to labour, and
 “ persecution, and poverty, and hunger, and
 “ martyrdom !”³⁶

It is sufficiently evident, that the prominence thus given by our reformer to the self-denial imposed on the pastors of the primitive church, arose from the disgust excited by the very opposite practices of the contemporary clergy. The following extract, will somewhat farther explain the process of reflection, by which Wycliffe passed to his stern conclusions on the important questions under review. “ True teaching is the debt most
 “ due to holy church, and is most charged of
 “ God, and most profitable to christian souls.
 “ As much, therefore, as God’s word, and the

³⁶ MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. xiv.

“ bliss of heaven in the souls of men, are better
 “ than earthly goods; so much are these worldly
 “ prelates, who withdraw the great debt of holy
 “ teaching, worse than thieves; more accursedly
 “ sacrilegious than ordinary plunderers, who
 “ break into churches, and steal thence chalices,
 “ and vestments, or never so much gold.”³⁷ The
 christianity supported by such men, he often
 describes as a libel on the exalted Being whose
 name is given to it. For, he observes, if it be
 “ a great sin to witness falsely against a common
 “ man, it is more to do thus against a holy man,
 “ and most of all so to do with the name of
 “ Christ, the Head of all saints, and the Lord of
 “ all lords! Also, if it be a great sin to lie, and
 “ to defraud men of temporal goods, it is more
 “ to deprive them of spiritual good, as of virtues
 “ and a moral life; but most of all to deprive
 “ them of faith, and of the mirror of Christ’s life,
 “ which is the ground of all well-being here-
 “ after.”³⁸ The existing clergy, therefore, as
 having grossly betrayed the most important of all
 trusts, are denounced as the most guilty portion
 of mankind. On the ground of this fact, which
 is presumed to be demonstrated on the authority
 of scripture, and on that of the most illustrious
 examples, the magistrate is called upon to sepa-
 rate the sacred order from those incentives to
 covetousness and ambition which had mainly
 contributed to these appalling results.³⁹

³⁷ Sentence of the Curse Expounded,
c. ii.

³⁸ Ibid. c. ix.

³⁹ In his work On Prelates he re-
marks “ that many of their sins are so

“ open that it needeth no more should
 “ be declared of them. But of lechery
 “ men say that prelates are full thereof,
 “ and of the most cursed species of it.
 “ Such, indeed, as it is a shame to

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It must be remembered, that the doctrine of our reformer, which thus severed all endowments from the ecclesiastical establishments, is not only opposed to the practice of the church of Rome, and of the church of England, but to that of almost every sect in protestant Christendom. It is true, in describing the custom of tithing as being in these later ages merely the institution of man, he would only utter the sentiment of multitudes, who have still regarded that branch of ecclesiastical polity, as in every view just, and as eminently useful. But in asserting that whatever the assessment of the civil power might be, the voluntary offerings of the people should form the only revenue of the christian priesthood, he was understood, and will perhaps be still understood, as exposing christianity itself to the last degree of peril. It is certain, however, that no purpose was farther from his mind. Had there existed a man in that age capable of reasoning on such matters with the calmness and intelligence of Dr. Paley, it is not difficult to conceive what the reply of our reformer would have been. It might have been urged upon him, that christianity is a religion which in its evidences, and in much of its doctrine, has to do with languages no longer spoken, and with laws and customs which have long since passed into oblivion. That, accordingly, it should be the province, and the sole province, of an order of men, to preserve its documents, to vindicate its claims, and to enforce its truths. To this, it might have been added, that a

“ know, much more to do. And so
 “ curates take example of them, and
 “ the people take example of their

“ curates, both wedded men and sin-
 “ gle.”—MS. c. ix.

legal provision for the support of such persons is strictly necessary to their existence, as an order; since apart from such a provision, the leisure requisite to their vocation could not be secured, nor those circumstances of independence which are so necessary to a faithful discharge of clerical duty.⁴⁰

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In reply to such statements, it would have been remarked by Wycliffe, that the necessity of the order of men adverted to, and the necessity of such men for the purposes named, it had never occurred to him to doubt. So far from this, his complaint had long been, that the clergy were not more adequately prepared for the performance of such duties, and more completely separated from all such employments, as might prevent their most efficient attention to them. To the producing of such men, schools, like that in which the youth and vigour of his days had passed, would be deemed fully competent—supposing them to possess their proper liberties, and to be suitably encouraged by the civil power. It would have been at once conceded, that among the persons aspiring to the office of churchmen, many would relinquish their object, if assured that their support must arise solely from the free-will offerings of the people. But this loss the reformer would have described as more apparent than real. He would not have hesitated to affirm, that should this policy be the means of reducing the clergy to one-third of their present number, the change must be fraught with benefits too great to be ascertained, if that third should only

Summary of
his doctrine
respecting
the civil
establish-
ment of
christianity
and clerical
revenue.

⁴⁰ Moral Philosophy, ii. 305—313.

CHAP. bring with them the true spirit of their office.
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— So long as the parish priest adhered to the law of celibacy, it was but little he could really need, and that little, it was supposed, might in general be obtained, by every devout man, without the remotest sacrifice of independence. On these principles the reformer had acted as rector of Lutterworth; they were also the law of his poor priests; and it was accordingly from experiment, that he was prepared to assert, that neither priest nor prelate needed to distrust them, if careful to cherish the temper, and to maintain the deportment, becoming their profession.

His language, therefore, in brief was, “let the
“ parochial boundaries in the ecclesiastical state
“ remain: let the present system of patronage
“ continue undisturbed: but let the men intro-
“ duced to the care of souls, in such places, re-
“ member how it was with their predecessors in
“ the years before Constantine, with the Master
“ whose name they bear, and with the apostles,
“ whom they esteem it their honour to succeed.
“ As thus appointed, let what they solicit from
“ the magistrate be simply protection; and to
“ meet the evils arising from the withholding of
“ settled pastors from the established cures, and
“ the many which must be inseparable from the
“ appointment of improper men, let such priests
“ as may prefer the labours of the evangelist to
“ the more regular duties of the parochial shep-
“ herd, be allowed to act upon that preference,
“ regulating their steps, in all things, by the
“ necessities of the people, and the prospects of
“ usefulness.”

His object, therefore, evidently was, to preserve the machinery of a religious establishment, but to preserve it subject to the action of so much external influence as might serve to counteract its necessary tendencies to inertness and decay. Such is the general state of things in this country at the present hour. And the reformer's theory, it will be seen, is scarcely more at variance with the maxims of the present church of England, than with those of the many who have deserted her pale. The positions, however, regarded by either party as erroneous, if fairly examined, will be found to have arisen, in most instances, from a too favourable judgment of human nature; and it is hoped that the same charitable feeling will have its place in the mind of the reader, when forming his estimate of the character of Wycliffe, as connected with these much disputed questions.

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While the reformer is found thus assailing the more acknowledged sources of clerical opulence, it will be anticipated, that such modes of exaction as had been discountenanced by synods and councils, would call forth his loudest censure. Simony, in the language of the age, consisted in the extorting of money as the price of discharging any spiritual function, as well as in the purchase of the livings of the church. Against these evils, which were sometimes most oppressive, the clergy frequently entered their protest in their solemn assemblies, but they generally returned to their respective cures, each to indulge in the vice which the whole had affected to renounce. "If any poor man," the reformer writes, "shall utter the truth of holy writ against the tyranny

On simony.

CHAP. VIII. “ of Antichrist and his officers, nought else follows
 “ but to curse him, to imprison him, to burn and
 “ slay him, and that without hearing his defence.
 “ It seemeth that John’s prophecy in the Apoca-
 “ lypse is now fulfilled, when no man shall be
 “ hardy enough to buy or sell, without wearing
 “ the mark of the beast. For now no man shall
 “ do aught in the church without these false bulls
 “ of Antichrist, none looking for their reward to
 “ the honouring of Jesus Christ, and of the Holy
 “ Spirit, in the souls of men.”⁴¹ Men are there-
 fore said to have become an article of merchandise,
 in common with the brute. But it is required,
 “ that the cursed heresy of simony in the clergy
 “ be destroyed, both in benefices, orders, sacra-
 “ ments, and pardons.” It is also stated, that
 “ whoever doeth most simony, and maintaineth
 “ most sin, should be judged, known, and treated
 “ as most a heretic, as most the adversary of
 “ Jesus Christ, and as Antichrist.”⁴² So gainful,
 however, had the matter of indulgences become
 to certain bishops, that should their life extend to
 twenty years, it was ascertained, that the receipts
 of each from the sale of such articles alone, must
 amount to sixty thousand marks. “ And thus,”
 he feelingly exclaims, “ these wicked prelates
 “ sell the souls of christian men to Satan for
 “ money, souls for which Christ shed his precious
 “ heart’s blood upon the cross!”⁴³ Hence, it is
 demanded, “ that the ravening and extortions of
 “ prelates, and of their officers, which they do
 “ under the colour of jurisdiction and alms, and

⁴¹ MS. Sentence of the Curse Ex-
 pounded, c. x. xvi.

⁴² MS. Of good Preaching Priests.

⁴³ MS. On Prelates.

“ their maintaining of sin for the sake of an annual
 “ rent, be wisely and truly stopped, and that they
 “ be well chastised for thus robbing of the king’s
 “ liege men.”⁴⁴ But while the native clergy are
 thus guilty, in this respect, “ the simony of the
 “ court of Rome does most harm, for it is most
 “ common, and done most under the colour of
 “ holiness, and robbeth most our land both of
 “ men and treasure.” In describing the en-
 croachments of papal avarice, he remarks, “ when
 “ a lord receives the gold for presenting to a
 “ benefice, the gold dwelleth still in the land, but
 “ when the pope hath the first-fruits, the gold
 “ goeth out, and cometh never again. And as
 “ for pardons, if they be aught worth, they must
 “ be free ; and to take money for them, is to sell
 “ the goods of grace, and therefore simony.”
 The guilty are then reminded of the leprosy
 which fell on Gehazi, and of the anathema pro-
 nounced by St. Peter on Simon Magus ; while
 “ kings and lords” are said to be “ charged of
 “ God to destroy this sin, and others ; and if
 “ they do it not, they are consenters and fauters
 “ thereof.”⁴⁵

But it will be remembered, that in instances where the temporal power of the pope was the matter of debate, and where many an exaction

On the spi-
 ritual power
 of the pope.

⁴⁴ MS. Of good Preaching Priests.

⁴⁵ MS. On Prelates. From Mr. Lewis’s account of this evil, it would seem that the reformer’s complaints respecting it referred mainly, if not entirely, to certain fees which were extorted from the junior clergy at ordination, and which at the most do not appear to have amounted to more than

two shillings from each person, (Life of Wiclif, pp. 157, 158.) But there was no branch of the ecclesiastical system free from this corruption, and it was important to know that Wycliffe’s opposition to the evil was as extended as the evil itself, and that it was founded on the most rational and devout principles. — Note to the second edition.

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proceeding from the necessities or the avarice of the papal court had occasioned serious complaint, the successor of St. Peter was still revered as the spiritual head of Christendom. From him, as from a fountain, all clerical power, it was thought, must proceed; and to him either alone, or as connected with a general council, lay the last appeal on every question relating to the doctrine or the discipline of the church. The vices of this spiritual sovereign, might be as pre-eminent as his station; but it was, nevertheless true, that on him, as the master-link, the whole hierarchy depended for its sanctity and existence. Wycliffe saw that an important relation did indeed subsist between the head and the members of that vast body. But that this relation was of divine appointment, he explicitly denied; nor could he doubt the corruption of a fountain, whence so much evil had descended.

The prelates of the age are said to assert, “that they ought not to be subject to secular lords, so as to pay them taxes, and to aid the commons; and also that they are not to be amended by their people of their open sins, but by the pope, who is their sovereign, and he by no man on earth, because he is greater than all.”⁴⁶ The reformer observes, in another treatise, and with visible indignation, “that when men speak against prelates and the religious, appealing to the poverty, and meekness, and other virtues of Christ, they say that these are the counsels, and not the commandments of Christ; and that, therefore, the bishop of

⁴⁶ MS. On Prelates, c. xvii.

“ Rome, who of all men is most contrary to CHAP.
VIII.
 “ Christ in life and teaching, may dispense with
 “ them.”⁴⁷ On the impiety of this doctrine,
 Wycliffe thus writes. “ All those who falsify
 “ the pope’s bulls, or a bishop’s letter, are cursed
 “ grievously in all churches, four times in the
 “ year. Lord, why was not the gospel of Christ
 “ admitted by our worldly clerks into this sen-
 “ tence? Hence, it appeareth, that they magnify
 “ the bull of a pope, more than the gospel; and
 “ in proof of this, they punish men who trespass
 “ against the bulls of the pope, more than those
 “ who trespass against the gospel of Christ.
 “ Accordingly, the men of this world fear the
 “ pope’s lead, and his commandments, more than
 “ the gospel of Christ, or the commands of God.
 “ It is thus that the wretched beings of this
 “ world, are estranged from faith, and hope, and
 “ charity; and become corrupt in heresy and
 “ blasphemy, even worse than heathens. Thus
 “ it is, that a clerk, a mere collector of pence,
 “ who can neither read nor understand a verse
 “ in his psalter, nor repeat the commandments
 “ of God, bringeth forth a bull of lead, testifying
 “ in opposition to the doom of God, and of ma-
 “ nifest experience, that he is able to govern
 “ many souls. And to act upon this false bull,
 “ he will incur costs and labour, and often fight,
 “ and get fees, and give much gold out of our
 “ land to aliens and enemies; and many are
 “ thereby slaughtered by the hand of our ene-
 “ mies, to their comfort and our confusion. Also

⁴⁷ MS. There be eight things by which simple christian men be es-
 tranged, &c. Bibl. Bodl.

CHAP. VIII. "the proud priest of Rome getteth images of
 " Peter and Paul on his lead, and would have
 " christian men believe, that all which the bulls
 " thus sealed speak, is done by their authority,
 " and that of Christ. And thus as far as he may,
 " he maketh that which is false to be the work
 " of Peter, and Paul, and Christ, and in this
 " would make them false. And by means of this
 " blasphemy, he robbeth Christendom of faith,
 " and good life, and worldly goods."⁴⁸ Instead
 of bowing to this authority, the reformer states it
 to be "the certain understanding of some men,
 " that the cruel manslayer of Rome, is not St.
 " Peter's successor; but the enemy of Christ,
 " the master of the emperor, and poison, under
 " the colour of holiness; and that he maketh
 " most unable curates."⁴⁹ In the following ex-
 tract, the tenet adverted to is numbered with
 those clerical inventions, which in later ages had
 so far destroyed the simplicity of the christian

⁴⁸ MS. Sentence of the Curse Ex-
 pounded, c. xvi. Rome he elsewhere
 describes, as converted into a mart for
 the property of the church, "where
 " he who can bring the most gold,
 " shall soonest be appointed to great
 " benefices." The men so introduced
 are said to be examples of pride and
 other sins, and hinderances to other
 true priests who would teach the law
 of God. And he remarks with solem-
 nity "that of all the vengeance which
 " God taketh of sinful men this is most,
 " to suffer such hypocrites to rule the
 " people, and by a withdrawment of
 " his word to draw them to hell." To
 announce such men "as able curates,
 " and great men of holy church," is
 noticed as a fair sample of "Anti-
 " christ's blasphemy." In the face of

all these corruptions, the clergy are
 said to maintain their allegiance to
 their chief, "so that when Paul asks
 " how men should preach, except they
 " be sent, they understand this but of
 " such as are sent by the pope, and
 " other worldly prelates." To this,
 however, it is replied, "that sending
 " of these worldly prelates is not
 " enough, without a sending of God,
 " as St. Paul saith." The authority
 thus assumed, is not only such as
 would make good men depend on the
 sanction of "fiend's children" that they
 might preach the gospel, but such as
 would even prevent an angel from deli-
 vering his message to the world, should
 it please this haughty priest to contro-
 vert "God's bidding." Ibid. c. i.

⁴⁹ Ibid. c. iii.

profession. " Prelates also make many new points
 " of belief, and say it is not enough to believe
 " in Jesus Christ, and to be baptized—as Christ
 " saith in the gospel by St. Mark—except a man
 " also believe that the bishop of Rome is the head
 " of holy church. But certainly no apostle of
 " Jesus Christ ever constrained any man to be-
 " lieve this of himself. And yet they were cer-
 " tain of their salvation in heaven. How then
 " should any sinful wretch constrain men to be-
 " lieve that he is head of holy church, while
 " he knows not whether he shall be saved or
 " lost? Certainly, when the bishop of Rome is
 " one who shall be condemned for his sin, it is a
 " devil of hell that they would compel men to
 " regard as the head of holy church!"⁵⁰

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But the supremacy of the pontiff may be totally renounced, and the forms of that hierarchy, of which he was so long the accredited head, be carefully retained. And had Wycliffe seen the members

On the
hierarchy.

⁵⁰ MS. Of Prelates, c. xiv. Adverting to the papal schism, he concedes the claim of Urban to be preferable to that of his rival, but speaks of any opinion on that subject as "beside belief," that is, as being no essential part of the christian faith. It is in the following manner that he frequently exposes the inconsistencies involved in the doctrine of the pope's supremacy. "It is openly said that there is no-
 " thing lawful among christian men
 " without leave of the bishop of Rome,
 " though he should be Antichrist, full
 " of simony and heresy. And com-
 " monly, of all priests he is most
 " contrary to Christ, both in life and
 " teaching; and he maintaineth most
 " sin by his privileges, excommunica-
 " tions, and long pleas; and he is

" most proud in opposition to Christ's
 " meekness, and most covetous of
 " worldly goods and lordships." To place the church under the control of such authority, is described as her subjection to the power of Antichrist, Ibid. c. xxii. Thus also, in one of the latest of his homilies he states that "true men say that so long as Christ
 " is in heaven the church hath in him
 " the best pope; and that distance
 " hindereth him not in doing his deeds,
 " as he promiseth that he is with his
 " always to the end of the world." Such men, it is farther said, "dare
 " not put two heads, lest the church
 " be monstrous." The "Head above" is therefore commended as alone worthy of confidence. Hom. Bib. Reg. 181.

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VIII.
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of the christian aristocracy, distinguished by their piety and pastoral zeal, as they were by names and jurisdiction, it is probable that the propriety of the distinctions conceded to prelates or metropolitans, would never have been questioned by him. Before his day, many vigorous efforts had been made to check the despotism of the papacy, but the claims of the national hierarchies had been, in general, regarded as sacred. To our reformer, however, these gradations of office in the church appeared to be unauthorized and injurious. I must presume that the reader is familiar with the substance of the controversy relating to this subject, and content myself with simply stating the judgment of Wycliffe concerning it, in his own language. Dividing the church into three parts, consisting of “preachers, defenders, and labourers,” he describes the first as including the men “who should be next to Christ, and next to heaven, and most full of charity.” Of this part he also states, that “they should all be of one religion, as priests and deacons, living the life of clerks. But the fiend,” he remarks, “has changed this part to many colours, as seculars and religious. And these have both many parts, as popes, and cardinals, and bishops, and archdeacons : also monks, and canons, hospitalers, and friars.” The writer then proceeds to expose the sectarian animosities, and the spirit of domination, which these diversities of pretension and authority are said to have introduced ; and the whole is regarded as the chastisement incurred by deserting the laws of the gospel, which declare that “it were better for clerks to be all of one

“ state.” The origin of the distinctions which had obtained among the secular clergy, is thus given. CHAP.
VIII.

“ By the ordinance of Christ, priests and bishops
“ were all one. But afterwards, the emperor
“ divided them, and made bishops lords, and
“ priests their servants; and this was the cause
“ of envy, and quenched much charity. For the
“ ordinances of Christ are founded in meekness,
“ in unity, and charity, and in contempt of riches,
“ and high estate.” This reasoning he concludes
by observing, “ so if possessioners were brought
“ to that state which Christ ordained for his
“ clerks, then should men live in charity, both
“ with seculars and also with the religious.”⁵¹

In his *Triologus*, the same doctrine is more than once inculcated. He there observes, “ I boldly
“ assert one thing, viz. that in the primitive
“ church, or in the time of Paul, two orders of
“ the clergy were sufficient, that is, a priest
“ and a deacon. In like manner I affirm, that in
“ the time of Paul, presbyter and bishop were
“ names of the same office. This appears from
“ the third chapter of the first Epistle to Ti-
“ mothy, and in the first chapter of the Epistle
“ to Titus. And the same is testified by that
“ profound theologian Jerome.” He then re-
marks again, that the authority of popes and
cardinals, of patriarchs, archbishops, and other
dignitaries, was unknown in the primitive church;
and thus concludes: “ From the faith of the
“ scriptures, it seems to me to be sufficient, that
“ there should be presbyters and deacons hold-
“ ing that state and office which Christ has

⁵¹ MS. On the Seven Deadly Sins. Cod. Ric. Jamesii. Bibl. Bodl.

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VIII.
— — —

“ imposed on them, since it appears certain, that
“ these degrees and orders have their origin in
“ the pride of Cæsar. If, indeed, they were
“ necessary to the church, Christ and his apostles
“ would not have been silent respecting them, as
“ those impiously pretend who magnify the papal
“ laws above those of Christ. Every catholic
“ should judge of the office of the clergy, from
“ what is taught in scripture, especially in the
“ Epistles to Timothy and Titus. Nor ought he
“ to admit the new inventions of Cæsar.”⁵²

On the reli-
gious orders.

But it will be perceived, that while all gradation of authority among the secular clergy is thus rejected, their general claims, as an order, are considered as legitimate. This concession, however, is not made with regard to the monks, or the mendicants. These are regarded as subject to laws which are in themselves opposed to scripture, and in their tendency only evil; while the parochial clergy have simply to return to the spirit of their vocation, to become, indeed, the fathers of their people, and the chief benefactors of their country. What the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes were in the age of the Saviour, that the friars, the monks, and the canons, are said to have become in the history of the church,—a multitude embracing so much of the element of dis-

⁵² Trialogus, lib. iv. c. xv. “ Touching
“ holy orders, he held that there were
“ but two, viz. of deacons and priests,
“ so do we.” Dr. James’s Apology for
John Wycliffe, p. 31. The doctor prob-
ably refers to the following passage
in the “ Institution of a Christian
“ Man,” a work which was intended
to express the doctrine of the church
of England under Henry VIII. “ The

“ trouthe is, that in the Newe Testa-
“ mente there is no mention made of
“ any degrees or distinctions in orders,
“ but only of deacons or ministers, and
“ of priests or bishops. Nor is there
“ any word spoken of any other cere-
“ mony used in the conferring of this
“ sacrament, but only of prayer, and
“ of the imposition of the bishop’s
“ hand.” c. xlii.

cord, as to be agreed in nothing, except in their CHAP.
VIII.
opposition to the designs of the gospel. It is ——— true, the contemporary prelates are frequently compared to Annas and Caiaphas; but they are still described as “less hypocrites” than the religious, inasmuch as these not only descend to the same vices, but aggravate their guilt by claiming the reputation of unusual sanctity. That, however, which chiefly offended our reformer, in the case of these fraternities, was the reflection which their very existence involved with respect to the wisdom or the benevolence of the Redeemer. The preference of human inventions to the known example, or to the plain instructions of the Son of God, he viewed as including the essence of blasphemy, since it imputed defect to the Godhead. It is thus he reasons to show, that these pretenders to superior purity were in truth idolaters. “If they choose to be ruled more
“according to the ordinance of sinful men and
“idiots, than according to the pure ordinance of
“Christ; and say that the ordinance of sinful
“man is better, and more certain, and more perfect than is the pure ordinance of Christ; herein
“they treacherously break all the commandments of God. They worship false gods, and
“are heretics and blasphemers; they worship,
“and love, and fear sinful men, and, in some
“cases, even devils, more than God Almighty;
“and Austin saith, that a man maketh that to be
“his god, which he feareth most, and loveth
“most.”⁵³ While such were the reformer’s opi-

⁵³ MS. Discourse on Luke, c. x. Attendite a fermento Pharisees, &c. C. C. C. Cambridge. See c. vii. p. 233.

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On the na-
ture of the
Christian
church.

nions as to the origin, and the character, of the religious orders, it is not surprising that in his plans for sequestrating the endowments of the church, the wealth of the monasteries should be pointed out as especially susceptible of a much wiser application.

Nor was he at all aware of hazarding any real interest of the church, by his proposed exclusion of all official precedence from among her priesthood, or by his unqualified opposition to the monastic orders. Since the period in which assemblies of fallible men were first allowed to determine the tenets which should be acknowledged as christian by whole provinces and nations, the name of the church had been imperceptibly transferred from the people to their spiritual guides. The judgment of the church ceased to be that of the body of the faithful. And that modest deference to general opinion, which was observable in the conduct of the earlier ministers of the gospel, was not enough to satisfy the more doubtful claims of many among their successors. Passing by the customs of centuries,—over which a melancholy glance was often cast, as on the gloomy space in which every thing evil had sprung up,—the reformer took his place with the christian brotherhood of the ages immediately following that of the apostles; and from the facts of that age, and of some others following, as well as from holy writ, he learned to discard the notion of a church representative—that is, a church including the teachers and excluding the taught. A senate may represent a nation, but it is not the nation. Hence, whether Wycliffe's attention were directed to ecclesiastical authority,

or to ecclesiastical wealth, he contended that by such expressions, as far as they occur at all in the memorials of primitive christianity, it is the power and the property of the christian fellowship that are meant, and not merely those of the clergy. He speaks accordingly of his scheme, in relation to the endowments of the church, as more nearly allied to general equity than to the guilt of sacrilege. And when required to bow to the decision of the church, the propriety of such a demand is less the matter of dispute, than the claims of the christian priesthood to be considered as forming the church; and as being, in consequence, alone possessed of church authority. His doctrine on this point, is thus stated. “When men speak
“of holy church, anon, they understand prelates
“and priests, with monks, and canons, and friars,
“and all men who have tonsures, though they
“live accursedly, and never so contrary to the
“law of God. But they call not the seculars
“men of holy church, though they live never so
“truly, according to God’s law, and die in perfect
“charity. Nevertheless, all who shall be saved in
“the bliss of heaven, are members of holy church,
“and no more.” Many, on the contrary, who are called such are “the enemies thereof, and the
“synagogue of Satan.”⁵⁴ At another time, he writes, “all those are cursed solemnly, who spoil,
“or take away any right from holy church, or
“defraud holy church of any endowment;” and to this it is replied, “that christian men, taught
“in God’s law, call holy church the congregation
“of just men, for whom Jesus Christ shed his

⁵⁴ MS. On Eight Things by which Simple Men are destroyed.

CHAP. VIII. “ blood ; and not mere stones, and timber, and
 “ earthly dross, which the clerks of Antichrist
 “ magnify more than the righteousness of God,
 “ and the souls of men.”⁵⁵

On spiritual
 censures.

But while thus assailing what he believed to be the great incentives to avarice and ambition among the clergy, he must have been aware of some means of protection from those spiritual weapons which were still in the hands of churchmen, and which were so often found to subdue the courage of the most turbulent. The keys of heaven were claimed by the successors of St. Peter, as their own, and to be employed at their pleasure. By each ecclesiastic, from the pontiff himself to the humblest parish priest, the same mysterious control over the future was assumed ; but by every member of the hierarchy the power of absolution must be derived, either immediately, or remotely, from the man raised to the apostolic chair. From the sentence of every subordinate authority there remained an appeal to the next in gradation. But until revoked by a superior, the words of binding or loosing, by whomsoever pronounced, were regarded as certainly determining the future allotment of the parties on whom they were pronounced. In the present state also, the sentence of excommunication cut off its victim from the remotest intercourses of social life. In this way

⁵⁵ MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. ii. The church, as described above, the reformer calls the “ very body ” of Christ ; but he speaks also of the “ mixed or seeming body,” meaning the professing church on earth, as including “ chosen men and hypo-

crites.” MS. Of Wedded Men, &c. The prologue quoted by Mr. Lewis on this subject (p. 152) is not the production of our reformer. See Baber’s Memoir of Wiclif, p. 51 Note to the second edition.

it was made to anticipate the horrors of a final separation from the communion of the blessed. CHAP.
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Thus canonically invested, the village curate appeared among his plebeian worshippers, armed with every instrument capable of effecting their subjection to his will; and while prelates lanced their anathemas against the aristocracy of the nations, monarchs were gravely taught, that the sovereign of the church could alone admit them to the celestial kingdom, and that should they die under the frown of the great representative of Deity, hell from beneath must move to meet them at his bidding! By this king of kings, the provinces of an offending monarch were frequently interdicted, and the acts of christian worship limited to the observance of such rites only as were deemed essential to salvation,—an event which threw an air of gloom and desolation over a country, of which, from the altered customs of more recent times, a partial conception only can be formed. To distract the councils of such a prince, the thunders of the papal court were often so directed, as to separate his principal advisers from himself, and from each other; and what this malignant policy failed to accomplish, was not unfrequently effected by absolving the whole of his subjects from their allegiance. By the disaffected, in a kingdom subject to these visitations of papal wrath, this collision of power was often hailed as auspicious; and many a long meditated treason was at once matured into revolt. Thus the court of Rome might inflict all the miseries of invasion, without incurring the danger attendant on such aggressions; and might

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as readily diffuse every element of revolution through a nation, and be herself secure from the penalties threatened to the traitor. The doctrine, which, in the language of Rome, is called the power of the keys, formed the basis of this most iniquitous of tyrannies. And so long as the maxims of spiritual power which the papal court had adopted were acknowledged, those by which she sought her worldly ascendancy could not be questioned, without inconsistency, and in consequence, with little prospect of success. Reformation in the faith and in the manners of the clergy was strictly necessary; but it was no less necessary to the accomplishment of that object, that the spell should be broken, which had led mankind to suppose that the priest possessed a power to control the destiny of the man, or of the community, who should attempt the renovation of the church. Wycliffe was fully apprised of this fact. Hence, while the mysteries of transubstantiation remained unquestioned, and even before he became known as concerned to translate the scriptures into the mother tongue, he laboured, as we have seen, to expose the fallacy and impiety of these perilous fictions. His reasonings on this subject occur, more or less prominently, in nearly the whole of his writings; and this importance is evidently assigned to them, from their obvious tendency to recover the mind of his countrymen from that bondage which this doctrine had imposed, and to abolish the complicated evils which had flown from it. Had the suffering which was said to be inflicted by the sentence of excommunication been far less

fearful, the levity with which it was resorted to CHAP.
VIII.
would have provoked the displeasure of our re-
former, from its marked opposition to a religion
characterized by the most tender expressions of
benevolence. But when the alarming evils, said
to be included in these penalties, were viewed in
connexion with the almost ceaseless infliction of
them ; and when both were considered in relation
to the motives commonly producing them, motives
evidently derived from the love of some paltry
interest, the indignation of Wycliffe was often so
far excited as to vent itself in language of the
sternest mould. At a moment of this description,
the following passage appears to have been
written. “ Christ said, as the gospel of Luke
“ witnesseth, that the Son of man came not to
“ lose men’s lives, but to save them. Why then
“ do our wayward curates curse the souls of so
“ many men to hell, and their bodies to prison,
“ and doom them to loss of goods, and sometimes
“ to death, for the sake of a little gain? And
“ this too, while they are themselves accursed
“ of God, for simony done at their entrance into
“ office, and for their failure in preaching, and
“ in giving the example of a holy life! Tithes,
“ therefore, are not due to them, but only pain
“ in hell. Often are they thus evil tormentors,
“ slaying the soul which is bought by the precious
“ blood of Christ, and which is better than all
“ the riches of this world. Surely they are not
“ spiritual fathers to christian souls, who thus by
“ their cursing would condemn their children to
“ hell for the sake of a little perishing clay! This
“ is to do worse than pagans, for they tormented

CHAP. " the body only, and not the soul for evermore ;
 VIII. " but these children of Satan, devise with all
 " their power to plunge the soul into everlasting
 " pain. Yea, certainly on this point, these way-
 " ward curates of Satan, would seem to be worse
 " than fiends, since *they* torment no soul, except
 " on account of infinite sin, while these clerks of
 " Satan doom souls to hell for a little temporal
 " debt, which they would pay as soon as they
 " are able, and which indeed is often no debt,
 " except as founded in old errors, and frauds,
 " and customs brought in against the command-
 " ment of God."⁵⁶

It is in the following language that he describes the impiety of the doctrine which made the pardon of sin to depend on the benediction of a priest, and to be in truth the act of a mortal. " Worldly
 " prelates blaspheme against God, the Father of
 " Heaven, by taking to themselves a power which
 " is especially and only his, that is, a power of
 " absolving from sins, and of giving a full re-
 " mission of them. For they take on them *prin-*
 " *cipally* the absolving from sin, and they make
 " the people to believe this of them, when, in
 " truth, they have only absolved as vicars or mes-
 " sengers, witnessing to the people, that on their
 " contrition, God absolveth them. Without the
 " sinner be contrite, that is fully have sorrow for
 " his sins, neither angel, nor man, nor God him-
 " self, absolveth him."⁵⁷ The practice of separating the excommunicated from the common charities of life, is thus calmly examined. " By

⁵⁶ MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. xvii.

⁵⁷ MS. Of Prelates, c. xlii.

“ our prelates, all those who commune with CHAP.
VIII.
 “ cursed men, are cursed, particularly if they do
 “ it wittingly. But by this sentence it would
 “ seem that God himself is to be accursed, since
 “ no excommunicated man will continue in this
 “ life without God’s communing with him, and
 “ giving him breath and sustenance, and this
 “ whether he be censured rightfully or wrongfully.
 “ And if God be ready to give him grace, and the
 “ forgiveness of his sins if he worthily ask it, and
 “ even before he ask it, this sentence would seem
 “ too broad, since our good God may not be held
 “ accursed.”⁵⁸ These enlightened sentiments
 are left to make their own impression on the
 reader. Concluding one of his most extended treatises,
 and a work wholly devoted to this subject, he observes,
 “ Men wonder much why prelates
 “ and curates curse so freely, inasmuch as St.
 “ Paul and St. Peter commanded men to bless,
 “ and not to have a wish to curse, while Jesus
 “ Christ blessed his enemies, and heartily prayed
 “ for them, even while they nailed him to the
 “ cross. And still more men wonder why they
 “ curse so freely in their own cause, and for
 “ worldly gain, and not on account of injury done
 “ to Christ, and his majesty. For men should be
 “ patient under their own wrongs, as were Christ
 “ and his apostles, but against God’s honour and
 “ majesty should they suffer no words to be
 “ spoken, as is the case in false and vain oaths,
 “ and impure ribaldry. But most of all men
 “ wonder why worldly clerks curse so freely for
 “ breaking their own statutes, privileges, and

⁵⁸ MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. xxv.

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“ wayward customs, more than for an open
 “ breaking of the commandments of God ; since
 “ no man is cursed of God, except for breaking
 “ of these, whatever worldly wretches may prate ;
 “ and no man is blessed of God, or shall come to
 “ heaven, but he who keepeth the commands of
 “ God. In the hour of death, it will be in vain
 “ that the wicked man hath never so many bulls
 “ of indulgence or pardon, or letters of fraternity,
 “ or thousands of masses by priests, monks, or
 “ friars. Let prelates and curates therefore leave
 “ these points, for many of them are as false as
 “ Satan ; and let them teach the will of God, and
 “ God’s curse, and the pains of hell as due to
 “ men unless they amend in this life ; and what
 “ bliss men shall have, if they teach truly the
 “ gospel of Christ, in word, and in holiness of
 “ life. And let them teach the mercy of God in
 “ the greatness of his blessing to all who continue
 “ to the end in true faith, and hope, and charity
 “ to God and man. God grant us this end.
 “ Amen.”⁵⁹ From these passages, it is evident,
 that with Wycliffe, the propriety of spiritual cen-
 sures, considered as a branch of christian disci-
 pline, was not a questionable matter. The abuses
 of this authority, and the deceptions which were
 connected with it, formed the matter of complaint.
 And revolting as these corruptions may now
 appear, it was to accomplish no small thing, to
 compel our ancestors of the fourteenth century
 to “ wonder ” at them, and especially to wonder
 at them for the reasons assigned. Through many
 ages, the nations of Europe had bowed to this

⁵⁹ MS. *Sentence of the Curse Expounded*, c. xxv.

fearful despotism ; and they had bowed to it as to one, which if not divine in its origin, had become so consolidated as to make resistance hopeless.”⁶⁰ CHAP.
VIII.
————

But churchmen were indebted for much of their opulence and power, to a doctrine which extended their influence from the living to the dead. Indeed, had the state of the departed been considered as irrevocable, the one half of the papal empire would not have been obtained. And it is a circumstance of some peculiarity, that the English reformer, whose inquiries respecting the doctrine of the church were so fearlessly conducted, was not allowed to proceed so far as wholly to reject this lucrative device. The fact, however, may be explained. It must not be overlooked, that the doctrine of an intermediate state as adhered to by Wycliffe, was separated from nearly every thing which had rendered it so alluring to the clergy. The custom of praying for the dead is certainly of much earlier origin than many of the corruptions which the reformer was called to oppose ; and of a still prior date was the kindred practice of offering thanksgiving for the aid vouchsafed to such believers as had closed their probation with distinguished honour. In the disputes of theologians, it has been sometimes deemed important to treat these services as of the same import. There is, however, a marked difference between them. They were, indeed, alike the offspring of heathenism, and made their appearance in the church, along with those

On the doctrine of purgatory.

⁶⁰ Mr. Lewis treats of this important doctrine, pp. 151—167, and has given another extract on the point in p. 157. The reader, who can refer

to those pages, will see that passages more extended and explicit than any hitherto published, were greatly needed.—Note to the second edition.

CHAP. superstitious observances which, as her gentile
VIII.

converts increased, were so rapidly multiplied. So late, however, as the eighth century, to pray for a departed spirit, was not necessarily to consider its state as one of suffering. But as the custom of thank-offerings was succeeded by petitions, so the notion of mere quiescence or repose was followed by that of a refining fire. And as the degree of torment endured would naturally regulate the worth of the services which were regarded as tending to abate its severity, or to hasten its close—the temptation to assign to this artifice a most prominent place in the machinery of papal superstition, became too powerful to be resisted.⁶¹

In one of his early pieces, Wycliffe has cited St. Augustine as teaching that “souls in purgatory are helped and comforted, and brought out thereof by the fasting of kinsmen, by the alms of friends, and by the devout prayers of good men and saints.”⁶² This statement is quoted with approbation, and this will not excite surprise if it be remembered that the writings of Augustine were revered by the reformer as next in authority to those of inspiration. In a subsequent treatise, he confesses “that saying of masses with cleanness of holy life, and burning devotion, most pleaseth God Almighty, and profiteth to christian souls in purgatory, and to men living on earth, to withstand temptations to sin.”⁶³ In the same page, however, his indignant censure is pointed against the base

⁶¹ See Prelim. View, c. i. sect. ii. p. 57.

⁶² MS. Cott. Titus, D. xix. 129.

⁶³ MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded.

merchandise which this doctrine had been made to support. “ Ah, Lord,” he exclaims, “ how
 “ much is our king and our realm helped by
 “ masses and prayers of simonists, and heretics
 “ full of pride and covetousness, and envy ; and
 “ who so much hate poor priests, because they
 “ teach the gospel and the life of Christ.”⁶⁴ In
 his work *On Prelates* the clergy are accused of
 “ inventing new pains, horrible and shameful, to
 “ make men pay a great ransom,”⁶⁵ and to
 counteract this “ artifice of Satan,” he ventures
 to describe all masses “ for which money is
 “ taken,” as the contrivance of hypocrisy and
 avarice. It was with a view completely to
 abolish these mercenary services, and to rescue
 the people from that false and dangerous confi-
 dence which had been thus produced, that the
 reformer so strenuously inculcated his favourite
 maxim respecting the inefficacy of all intercessory
 prayer, unless offered in the spirit of sincere
 devotion. With the same view prayer is de-
 fined, as “ consisting principally in holy life,”
 and of this prayer the Redeemer is said to speak,
 “ when he saith in the gospel, that we must pray
 “ evermore.” In support of this interpretation,
 St. Augustine and other saints are appealed to,
 and the exercise is again said to “ stand in holy
 “ desire, and also in word ;” but the latter is de-
 clared “ to be nought worth, except it be uttered
 “ with devotion, and purity, and accompanied
 “ by holiness of life.” It is, therefore, inquired,
 “ why the prayer of prelates should be magnified
 “ so much, and sold so dear, while they know

CHAP.
VIII.
-----⁶⁴ Sentence of the Curse Expounded.⁶⁵ MS. c. iii.

CHAP. "not whether it shall be accepted or rejected?"
 VIII.

"The prayer of the layman who shall be saved," is affirmed to be "without measure better than" "that of a prelate who shall be lost." It was pleaded, indeed, by such men, that if not heard "for their own holiness, they were heard in" "virtue of holy church;" but this is treated as "a dream, having no foundation in any place" "of holy writ, inasmuch as God saith absolutely," "that such prayer is an abomination."⁶⁶ In another of his pieces, these masses are described as novelties, and are numbered in this respect with the pilgrimages, and the feigned absolutions of the period. He complains also of the clergy as "making the people believe, that if the priest" "say a certain mass for a soul, it shall anon be" "out of purgatory; and this, though God of his" "righteousness ordain that soul to abide there" "forty years or more, and though this priest be" "himself accursed for his simony and pride. For," "as they falsely pretend, the mass may not be" "impaired."⁶⁷

In these extracts there is no suspicion disclosed as to the reality of the pains of purgatory. But the efficacy of prayer for the dead is viewed as connected with the devotions of the laity, no less than with those of the clergy, and as attended in the case of both by so much uncertainty, as to demonstrate the weakness of the confidence so generally reposed in that kind of aid. The doctrine was thus divested of its chief importance as a source of gain to the clergy.

But it was not enough to question the success

⁶⁶ MS. On Prelates, c. xi.

⁶⁷ Ibid. c. xxxviii.

of intercession in favour of the departed while performed by the more vicious of the clergy. A CHAP.
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considerable scepticism is after a while expressed with respect to its influence when proceeding from characters less objectionable, or even from the pontiff himself. In the work intitled, “Of the Church and her Governance,” evidently one of his latest productions, the words of the Saviour, “let the dead bury their dead,” are cited as discountenancing such practices, though perpetuated by the most devoted men, and with the best intentions.⁶⁸ And when he states that “the pope and his, are out of all charity, if there dwell any soul in purgatory, since he may,” according to the popular creed, “with full heart, and without any cost deliver them,” it is beyond doubt that his faith in an intermediate state, regarded it as an abode over which little or no influence could be exerted by any power on earth. For many years previous to his death, his allusions to this tenet are few and cautious, tending almost invariably to separate it from its corruptions, rather than to define its import or its uses. In his sermons there is scarcely one in fifty containing the least reference to it, and the notices which occur are so transient and obscure as to bespeak the general indecision of his mind on this point.⁶⁹ From his increasing perception of the errors connected with this doctrine, which

⁶⁸ MS. Bib. Reg. 18, b. ix.

⁶⁹ In the MS. last cited, he speaks of the church as consisting of three parts, “the saints in purgatory,” forming one. In his *Trialogus*, also, the church is thus described, “Tri-

plex est Ecclesia militans, dormiens, et triumphans.” iv. 22. In one of his later homilies he describes John the Baptist as the most devout man “after Christ,” and yet speaks of him as going to “purgatory” at death.

CHAP. is so observable in his writings, it may be doubted,
 VIII. whether he considered the intermediate state as
 at all a state of suffering, at the period of his
 death.⁷⁰

On the
 abuse of
 sanctuaries.

By the doctrine of purgatory, the decisions of the invisible tribunal, though regarded as proceeding from the will of the Deity, were supposed to be modified, and frequently revoked, in compliance with the intercessions of the priesthood. The same motives also, which had secured a credence to this supposed interference with the allotments of the spiritual regions, produced a submission to many clerical intrusions in the administration of criminal justice in the present world. The cities of refuge were sanctioned by the Hebrew polity; and it is well known that similar immunities were granted to particular localities in gentile nations. In both, the existence of such retreats may have been sometimes favourable to equity, by arresting the arm of violence, or of lawless revenge. But the evils which were inse-

⁷⁰ Dr. Lingard not only says of our reformer that "he inculcated the doctrine of purgatory," but that "he strenuously maintained the efficacy of the mass;" and the amount of information hitherto possessed on this point may be inferred from the circumstance that this is said on the authorities supplied by Mr. Lewis. But surely the man who could go through his pulpit services for twelve months together without more than a single reference to the mass, except to censure its imperfections and abuses, can hardly be said to have been a strenuous advocate for its efficacy. Mr. Lewis may be right in stating that Wycliffe believed in "the bitter pains of purgatory," for

during a large portion of his life he did so. But in inquiries of this nature nearly every thing must depend upon dates. To a correct acquaintance with this subject, it was strictly necessary to know the frequency or the variety of the reformer's allusions to it, to know, also, something of the distinctness or obscurity that may have marked those allusions, and to know, above all, that before his death, Wycliffe had learned to use the word purgatory as referring merely to an intermediate state through which the most holy of mankind must pass to their final rest. Lingard's Hist. iv. 266. Lewis, 161. —Note to the second edition.

parable from this custom in heathen states, were too soon connected with it as adopted in the christian church. In the age of William the first, and so late as the reign of Stephen, the rights of sanctuary, which protected the place of christian worship from those deeds of rapine and bloodshed which then filled the land, were often a political benefit. But in the age of Edward the third, the uses of these places of retreat were not so obvious. Wycliffe appears to have seen them only through the medium of their abuses, and these were evidently of the most flagrant description. "Westminster, Beverley, and other places," are described as "challenging this franchise and "privilege." In opposing this pretension, it is observed that the cities of refuge afforded but a temporary shelter to offenders, and to such offenders only as had slain a man unwittingly; whereas modern sanctuaries were both a retreat, and a home, to culprits of every class. And this, while they were often known to be the most vicious of men. Thus he states indignantly, "that "wicked men, open thieves, known murderers, "and such as have borrowed their neighbours' "goods, and are able to make restitution, dwell "thus in sanctuary, and no man may impeach "them by process of law." And the clergy, it is observed, "maintain stiffly that the king "should confirm this privilege, though serving "but to perpetuate a nest of thieves in his "kingdom."⁷¹

Nor was the influence of churchmen with respect to an intermediate state, and of the present

On the invocation of saints.

⁷¹ MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. ix. xx.

CHAP.
VIII.
—

world, supposed to terminate with their removal to the celestial kingdom. Under every anxiety, whether arising from the immediate necessities of the worshipper, or from the supposed state of his departed kindred, the throne of those who had performed the work of intercession on earth, was believed to be accessible, and was regarded as forming, to the children of mortality, the most appropriate medium of approach to the majesty of heaven. An apostle, indeed, had emphatically declared, that “there is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus,” and it would seem sufficiently evident that to render this invocation of saints a rational service, these new objects of religious confidence should become vested with the attributes of Deity,—at least with omnipresence, or omniscience. In the face, however, of these, and of other difficulties, the practice became general,—so much so, that the name of the Saviour was nearly excluded from the devotions of the people by those of the Virgin, and of the multitude, whose sanctity, or ambition, had secured them a place in the Roman calendar. This custom of praying *to* the departed, like that of praying *for* them, was opposed by Wycliffe, with a firmness which increased as the errors connected with it were discerned. At an early period, he had learned to regard many who were raised to the dignity of saints, as persons whose salvation was by no means certain. To confide in the lost for spiritual aid must be worse than vain. After a while, it was suggested as important to limit such invocations to those among the blessed, whose beatified state could be

ascertained from the language of the scriptures; and at length the entire practice is discountenanced, as uncommanded, and as at variance with a due regard to the mediation of Christ.⁷²

CHAP.
VIII.

There are few errors of the Romish church more objectionable in the esteem of protestants than those which relate to the adoration of images. So striking a conformity with the leading feature of those superstitions, which christianity was so plainly intended to counteract and destroy, was not to become suddenly prevalent. And if it has survived the shock of the protestant reformation, this has not been without resisting a degree of light which has rendered the act of bowing down to any likeness of invisible realities in a much greater degree criminal. It might have been expected, that customs which obtained their ascendancy amid the barbarism attendant on the fall of the empire, would have been gradually discouraged, as the civilization of Christendom advanced. But to vindicate this semi-heathenism the most distinguished Romanists have exhausted the stores of their erudition, and employed the

On the
worship of
images.

⁷² Hom. Bib. Reg. 18. b. xiv. "The church of England," he observes, "has this very reasonable custom, that when a saint is invoked the words are addressed immediately to Jesus Christ, and not principally to the saints; nor is the solemnity of a saint-day to any purpose if it does not tend to magnify Jesus Christ, and to make souls in love with him. It is therefore to be inferred, that when the observance of such days deviates from this end, the motive must be avarice, or some other sin; which disposes many men to think

"that all those saint-days ought to be abolished, that they may celebrate the festival of Jesus Christ alone, that the memory of Jesus Christ being always recent, the devotion of the people might be no longer parcelled out between him and his members." Trialogus, iii. 31. The chapter contains many things on the excellence and sufficiency of the Redeemer's mediation, and on the sinister motives from which the practice of commending other intercessors had arisen.

CHAP. whole of their strength. The doctrine of infal-
VIII. libility, though it was not strictly necessary that
—— it should operate at all with respect to such a
matter, has no doubt been the chief cause of this
pertinacity. It may be also, that to inform the
understanding, and discipline the affections, has
been found a more laborious enterprise, than to
impress the senses, and to raise indefinite emotion
to the place of principle.

This custom certainly did not provoke the degree of opposition from our reformer, that, reasoning from other points, was to have been expected. It should, however, be remembered, that by declaring the Most High to be the only object of religious worship, and the Son of God to be the only Mediator, he not only condemned the invocation of saints, but stripped their images and relics of whatever had rendered them the matters of a superstitious veneration. While such were his doctrines, no visible object of worship could be recognized, excepting such as were admitted to represent that Invisible Nature, of whose compassion to our race the cross was the most affecting memorial. And that the use even of this was at length discarded, may be safely inferred from the fact, that his immediate disciples provoked the displeasure of the clergy by their undisguised contempt of every such aid to devotion.⁷³ Some years, also, before his death, he remarked, that a near connexion existed between gazing on an image, and the act of idolatry. And to those who were accustomed to plead, that no worship was rendered to the image, but to the

⁷³ Wals. 358.

Being represented by it, his reply was, that such was the reasoning of idolatrous heathens, and the men resorting to it are described as the patrons of idolatry.⁷⁴

CHAP.
VIII.

With these efforts to counteract the propensities to creature-worship, the reformer connected an exposure of the doctrine which exhibited the more illustrious of the saints as having performed certain works of piety or mercy, beyond what were necessary to their own salvation; and which taught, moreover, that these works were left to be dispensed by the clergy, to the more necessitous, in the matter of such virtues. This scheme, which bespeaks an ignorance of the gospel scarcely a remove from heathenism, was the faith of the populace in every state of Europe through many centuries. And that churchmen, as the almoners of this spiritual bounty, might be able to distribute it efficiently, it was important that the wants of each applicant should be correctly ascertained. Hence the necessity of that momentous article in catholic discipline, confession to a priest.

The causes which, in the earlier ages of the church, had limited the office of arbitrator with respect to such secular disputes as arose among believers, to the christian pastor,⁷⁵ would tend to restrict the duty of confession, to the same order

Auricular
confession.

⁷⁴ James's Apology, c. viii. sect. vi. MS. Exposit. Decal. p. 48. MS. Ecclesiæ Regimen, No. 10. He recommends "that the wasted treasure hanging on stocks and stones, be wisely spent in defence of the kingdom, and in relieving of the poor commons, that the people of our

"land be not brought to theft and
"lechery under colour of such pil-
"grimages, nor alms drawn from
"needy men who are bought with
"Christ's precious blood. MS. Of
"good Preaching Priests.

See Prelim. View, c. i. sect. x.

CHAP.
VIII.

of men. But the practice of confession, as existing in the catholic church, resulted in a greater measure from her doctrine respecting the efficacy of priestly absolution. Wycliffe, while admitting the propriety of a form of absolution, denied that a penitent offender could fail to obtain pardon on account of a withholding of that ceremony. In like manner, he acknowledged that confession made to a priest might be seemly, and in some cases highly commendable; but it was at the same time affirmed, that where sanctity and wisdom were most conspicuous, whether in a priest, or a layman, there was most of the character necessary to receive confessions, and to administer the aids of religion. He accordingly remarks that "confession made to those who are true priests, and who understand the will of God, doth much good to sinful men, so long as contrition for past sins come therewith."⁷⁶ On another occasion, he thus concludes a series of enlightened observations on this practice. "So this confession which is made to man, has oftentimes been varied with the varying of the church. For first, men confessed themselves to God, and to the common people, and this manner of confession was used in the time of the apostles."⁷⁷ Much harm is said to have resulted from the abandonment of this primitive custom: for as no benediction of man can bring

⁷⁶ MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. vi. This passage is cited by Mr. Lewis, as containing a full statement of the reformer's doctrine with regard to this important article, (p. 171.) But, it will appear from the

passages which follow, that Wycliffe's sentiments on this point were greatly more enlightened than the extract given by my predecessor would suggest. Note to the second edition.

⁷⁷ MS. Papa Schismæ, c. iii.

the impenitent to heaven ; and as sin generally bears its own punishment along with it ; the canonical regulations with respect to penance, are viewed as superfluous and deceptive. The matters, indeed, which the confessor takes beneath his cognizance, are stated to be such as must often elude his penetration, and accordingly leave him unequal to the task of adjusting the penalties incurred. Where this failure of capacity occurred, the defect is said to have been too commonly supplied by caprice, and by motives still more objectionable. His parting advice, therefore is, “ Seeing that many men often “ confess themselves to their confessors in vain ; “ confess thyself to God, with constancy, and “ contrition, and he may not fail, he will absolve “ thee.” ⁷⁸

It was thus the reformer endeavoured to disen-
thral his countrymen, and to distinguish between
the true claims of the christian pastor, and the
assumed authority of the existing priesthood. To
deprive churchmen of that dominion over the
conscience, which the confessional had secured
to them, was a step strictly necessary to restore
in the laity of Christendom the feeling of re-
sponsible beings, and to confer upon them, what
no second tyranny has been known to invade—
liberty of thought ! So long as it was believed

⁷⁸ Ibid. It was something to teach that mere confession, though made to the highest ecclesiastical authority, was a useless service. It was more to assert that confession to a priest was not more a religious duty than confession to a layman. But Wycliffe learnt to believe that any man con-

fessing his sins to God alone, and doing it with penitence, should be assuredly saved. It was important to know that our reformer passed so far into the region of true christian liberty, and that he could thus urge his followers to use their freedom.—Note to the second edition.

CHAP. to be a duty to disclose in the ear of a confessor
 VIII. — what had passed in the secret places of the mind, the most cautious guard would be kept against the intrusion of thoughts opposed to the authority exercised by the clergy, or to the superstitions which that order of men had so long sanctioned. Let confession be necessary to absolution, and let absolution be an essential link in the chain of salvation, and the empire which the papal priesthood laboured to establish and perpetuate is conceded. To the mind of Wycliffe this connexion of things was manifest, and in the history of our country it was reserved to his master genius to break this triple cord.

On the doctrine of indulgences.

With confession to a priest the doctrine of indulgences is nearly allied. The sale of these commodities was the abuse which first roused the displeasure of Luther; and which contributed so much toward that memorable revolution with which his name is so illustriously associated. It will be proper, therefore, to notice the feeling with which they were regarded by Wycliffe, nearly two centuries earlier. We have seen that according to the doctrine of the church of Rome, the good works of the saints which were more than were required for their own justification, were deposited with the merits of the Saviour, so as to form a sort of spiritual treasury. “The keys of this,” it has been observed, “were committed to St. Peter, and to his successors the popes, who may open it at pleasure, and by transferring a portion of this superabundant merit to any particular person for a sum of money, may convey to him either the pardon

“ of his own sins, or a release for any one in CHAP.
VIII.
 “ whose happiness he is interested from the pains
 “ of purgatory. Such indulgences were first in-
 “ vented in the eleventh century, by Urban the
 “ second, as a recompense for those who went
 “ in person upon the meritorious enterprise of
 “ conquering the Holy Land. They were after-
 “ wards granted to those who hired a soldier
 “ for that purpose, and in process of time were
 “ bestowed on such as gave money for accom-
 “ plishing any pious work enjoined by the pope.”⁷⁹
 It is, no doubt, true, that the embryo of this
 custom, as of most others in the history of the
 papacy, may be traced to a period much more
 remote than the pontificate of Urban the second.
 But that adjustment of the penalties of eccle-
 siastical discipline, which began at a compara-
 tively early period to be restricted to the clergy,
 was gradually extended from what was to be
 endured in this world, to the sufferings awaiting
 the offender in the next; and a power which was
 once exercised with the tenderest solicitude for
 the spiritual welfare of the delinquent, became
 known, ere long, as a most effective means of
 storing the coffers of the priest. “ Prelates,”
 observes the English reformer, “ foully deceive
 “ christian men by their pretended indulgences
 “ or pardons, and rob them wickedly of their
 “ money.” In proof of this statement he re-
 marks, “ that alms after the will of sinful men”
 may procure “ thousands of years of pardon, and
 “ also pardons without number, to man’s under-
 “ standing.” These are also described as granted

⁷⁹ Robertson’s Charles V.

CHAP. VIII. “ by virtue of Christ’s passion and martyrdom,
 ——— “ and by the holy merits of saints, which they
 “ did, more than was needful for their own bliss.”
 Offended by this strange mixture of creature-
 merit with that of the Saviour, and scarcely less
 with the pardon itself, which was presumed to be
 so conveyed, he affirms that the doctrine is one
 “ never taught in all the gospel, and never used,
 “ neither by Paul, nor Peter, nor any other
 “ apostle of Christ; and yet they might, and
 “ could, and were so full of charity as certainly
 “ to have taught and used this pardon, if there
 “ had been any such. For in Christ was all
 “ manner of good doctrine, and good life, and
 “ charity, and these were most abundant, after
 “ him, in his apostles. And since Christ dis-
 “ covered and taught all that is needful and
 “ profitable, and still taught not this pardon, it
 “ follows that this pardon is neither needful nor
 “ profitable.”⁸⁰

Adverting to the departed in an intermediate
 state, he remarks, “ it passeth man’s knowing
 “ what is the doom of such souls. It seemeth
 “ then great pride for sinful man to make himself
 “ certain and master of the judgment of God,
 “ which still he knoweth not.—Also if this pardon
 “ be a spiritual and heavenly gift, it should be
 “ given freely as Christ teaches in the gospel,
 “ and not for money, nor worldly goods, nor
 “ fleshly favour. But if a rich man will dearly
 “ buy it, he shall have a pardon extending to
 “ a thousand years, though he be really accursed
 “ of God for his sinful life. While the poor

⁸⁰ MS. On Prelates.

“ bedridden man, who may not travel to Rome, CHAP.
VIII.
 “ nor to such another place, he shall have no
 “ pardon of the pope, though he be holy and full
 “ of charity. Since then, this pardon, if there
 “ be any such, should be freely given, it is theft
 “ and robbery to take thus much gold for it.
 “ Also this pretended pardon deceiveth many
 “ men. For rich men trust to reach heaven
 “ thereby without pain, and therefore the less
 “ fear to sin; and of contrition, and forsaking sin,
 “ and doing alms, little is spoken.”⁸¹ He then
 observes, that if the nature of such pardons were
 “ truly told, they should be set at nought.”
 Again, he remarks, “ great falseness it is so much
 “ to magnify the power of the pope in purgatory,
 “ such as no man here can show to be real,
 “ either by holy writ, or reason; since, in this
 “ world, we see an obscure man⁸² may thus
 “ despise the pope, and oppose his lordship; and
 “ he doth in vain, all his might, all his wit, and
 “ all his will, to be avenged upon such a poor
 “ harlot. It seemeth, then, for many reasons,
 “ that this feigned pardon is a subtle merchan-
 “ dise of Antichrist’s clerks, to magnify their pre-
 “ tended power, and to get worldly goods, and
 “ to make men free from the fear of sin, and
 “ sweetly to wallow therein as swine.”⁸³ If the
 contemporaries of Luther admired the boldness
 of the man, who could venture, though very cau-
 tiously, to question this plenitude of the papal
 power; the reader will judge of his claim to the
 attribute of courage, who in much less favour-

⁸¹ Ibid.⁸² “ Little harlot” in MS. signifying a humble or despised person.⁸³ Ibid.

CHAP. VIII. able times, proceeded to a greater length in
 ——— exposing the assumptions of the same appalling
 despotism.

On the celi-
 bacy of the
 clergy.

The connexion between auricular confession, and the most politic distribution of these indulgences, has been noticed. That which subsists between the business of the confessional, and the celibacy of the clergy, is equally certain, and equally dangerous. The law which required a disclosure of every particular that might possibly be connected with guilt, whether relating to the conduct, or to the secrets of mental history, was one to be enforced on the conscience of every female, and by an unmarried priesthood. To evade it, would be to incur the guilt of insincerity, self-reproach, and, in no few instances, the apprehensions of every future evil; while to act upon it was to conform to what could hardly fail to prove hostile to the best safeguard of female innocence. Nor is it easy to conceive, that confessors would always pass this ordeal untainted. To do so, they must be either more or less than human. That the morals of a community must suffer from this sort of intercourse is manifest; and whether the impurities of the clergy, so frequently deplored by Wycliffe, arose from this source, in a greater or a less degree, it is certain that their forced celibacy was the parent of vices which frequently roused his severest indignation. The guilty conduct of priests, with respect to “wives, “widows, and maidens,” is said to lead to the frequent “murder of children.” And the licentious practices of the higher clergy, are said to be but too faithfully copied by their dependants and

Mr. Lewis found it convenient to visit the metro-
 polis of the sister kingdom, for the purpose of
 ascertaining what the productions were, in behalf
 of which the protection of Lancaster was soli-
 cited,—a point of some importance, in conse-
 quence of the early date attributed to them,—he
 would readily have detected the error of his in-
 formant.⁹

By what means so excellent a scholar as arch-
 bishop Usher was misled I know not;¹⁰ but this
 mistake, with some others, is copied into a printed
 catalogue of the manuscript library of Trinity
 college, which lies on the table of the Bodleian;
 and received without hesitation, by Mr. Lewis, it
 has been adopted by writers without number.¹¹

But while it has been an error to describe the
 reformer as dedicating certain of his works to the
 duke of Lancaster, in 1368, the known activity
 of his disposition forbids our considering him as

CHAP.
III.

Novel mea-
 sure of the
 English par-
 liament in
 1371.

⁹ Indeed, were the pieces adverted to of the date which Mr. Lewis has assigned to them, the mind of Wycliffe in 1368 would be found to have been precisely what it was about 1380;—a conclusion, which, however generally it may have been formed, is contrary to fact. On this supposition, also, the chief incidents in the reformer's life would remain to be considered under very different impressions from those with which we are now called to regard them.—MSS. Dub. class. c. tab. 3. No. 12. Of the contents of this volume, the reader will judge from the fact, that the pieces 1--19 in the catalogue of the reformer's writings (vol. ii.) are included in them. Note to the second edition.

¹⁰ In examining the volume, I con-

sulted the judgment of Dr. Sadler, the esteemed librarian of Trinity college, who expressed himself satisfied, that the writing was that of the Archbishop, but slightly altered from his usual hand, by an effort to write well. Note to the second edition.

¹¹ The writer of an extended critique on these volumes, in the Church of Ireland Magazine, has stated that I had overlooked some letters in the Dublin MSS. written by Wycliffe even before the death of Armachanus (1360). To have discovered such documents would have been highly gratifying; but it appears upon examination, that the MS. alluded to does not admit of being attributed to our reformer.—Note to the second edition.

CHAP. unemployed at any season. It is not, however,
 III. — until the meeting of parliament, in 1371, that we become again aware of his influence in connexion with any public event. In that assembly, a change was attempted, altogether new in our parliamentary history, and one which could scarcely have been contemplated, except under a decline of that superstitious homage which had been so long rendered to the clergy.¹² The exclusion of all persons belonging to that order, from those offices of state which had been almost invariably possessed by churchmen, was the altered policy demanded. Nor was this novel requisition urged in consequence of any peculiar incompetency in the existing officers, so much as on the general principle, of an impropriety in allowing men avowedly devoted to the spiritual welfare of the nation, to become absorbed in the management of affairs altogether secular.¹³ These matters, it was urged, pertained to secular men; nor was it any longer to be admitted that their capacities were unequal to such a charge. The effort to produce this important change in the character of the government, is attributed by historians to the secret influence of John of Gaunt. In the writings of Wycliffe also, there is no evil more frequently, or more feelingly, deplored, than that which this measure was designed to remove. It is one, therefore, which may deserve a passing notice.

Its accordance with a favourite doctrine of Wycliffe.

¹² Fox has assigned too early a date to this event, but observes, "that through the motion of the lords in parliament, and partly (as witnesseth mine author) for hatred of the clergy

"also, the said offices were removed from the clergy to the lords temporal."—Acts and Monuments, i. 547.

¹³ Cotton's Abridgment, 45 Edward III.

In the age of our reformer, the mind capable of viewing the religious claims of men at all as they are exhibited in the sacred writings, must have seen much to lament in customs which were daily sanctioned, even by the most reputable classes of churchmen. It has appeared, that the conversion of the western nations was followed by the elevation of the clergy to all the more important civil offices. England had so far conformed to the times in this respect, that at the period of Wycliffe's intimacy with the Duke of Lancaster, the state was scarcely less under the controul of the prelates than the church. The offices of lord chancellor and lord treasurer, and those of keeper and clerk of the privy seal, were filled by clergymen. The master of the rolls, the masters in chancery, and the chancellor and chamberlain of the exchequer, were also dignitaries, or beneficed persons of the same order. One priest was treasurer for Ireland, and another for the marshes of Calais; and while the parson of Oundle is employed as surveyor to the king's buildings, the parson of Harwick is called to the superintendence of the royal wardrobe. It is known also, that worldly occupations still less consistent with the credit and sanctity of the clerical profession, were not unfrequently found in connexion with it.¹⁴

Wycliffe saw these practices confirmed, by the example of men whose names were honoured in their generation; but to eradicate the evil, was an object to which he applied his most powerful

Ground of
his opposi-
tion to
existing cor-
ruptions.

¹⁴ Collier's Hist. i. 438, 460.

CHAP. reasoning, and some of his severest rebukes.¹⁵ It
 III. ——— had roused his indignation so early as in the year 1356, and in his latest compositions the pernicious custom is assailed with an ardour augmented rather than diminished. That the assumption of this motley character, was indeed incompatible with the faithful discharge of clerical duty, may now be sufficiently obvious. But the history of the church discloses, that through many centuries previous to the age of the English reformer, inconsistency was rarely, if at all, perceived in this mixture of the secular power with the spiritual. To detect this evil as it was detected by Wycliffe, required much christian discernment, and unusual independence of thinking. And to avow his doctrine on this point, opposed as it was to prevailing and deep-rooted custom, and, above all, to the secular spirit of the existing priesthood, required that the intrepidity of the reformer should keep pace with his intelligence.

¹⁵ The following extract in reference to Wycliffe, and the reformation contemplated by the parliament in 1371, though in some respects inaccurate, is worth transcribing. "It appeareth by such as have observed the order and course of times, that this Wycliffe flourished about the year of our Lord 1371, Edward the third reigning in England; for this we do find in the chronicles of Caxton:—'In the year of our Lord 1371, (saith he) Edward the third, king of England, in his parliament, was against the pope's clergie. He willingly hearkened and gave ear to the voices and tales of heretics, with certain of his counsell; conceiving and following

"sinister opinions against the clergie. Wherefore, afterwards, he tasted and suffered much adversity and trouble. And not long after, in the year of our Lord 1372, he wrote unto the bishop of Rome, that he should not, by any means, intermeddle any more within his kingdom, as touching the reservation or distribution of benefices; and that all such bishops as were under his dominion, should enjoy their former and ancient liberty, and be confirmed of their metropolitans, as hath been accustomed in times past.'" — Fox. Acts and Monuments, ubi supra.

Nor is it consonant with reason, any more than with religion, to attach a marked suspicion to the ardour which may be evinced in attempting the overthrow of a moral structure so much at variance with every notion of moral propriety. The christian must consider the gospel as sufficiently attested to make the reception of it a duty. Hence, should he view an unbeliever as sincere, he cannot forbear to question his integrity with respect to the means of conviction. But it is curious to observe, how confidently the opponent of the gospel anticipates the meed of good intention while seeking its total overthrow; and how commonly he withholds that award from the more discriminate zeal, which spares religion while assailing its corruptions. The cause of this, however, can hardly be a secret. Christianity is disposed of with little difficulty, while concealed under the thick veil of its abuses. It is when separated from these that it assumes a perplexing aspect; such indeed, as to render the reformer of religion, a much less attractive object on the stage of history, in the view of some writers, than the crowd of priests or statesmen, who have conspired to vitiate its principles, and thus to impair its fame. It is admitted, however, that the mind which has received the culture necessary to appreciate the beauties of art, is offended by every false combination, and by every trace of rudeness or deformity. And it certainly is not less evident that the perceptions and feelings of men in relation to morals, and to the gradations of piety, are susceptible of similar discipline and improvement. If

CHAP. there be a difference here, we may presume, for
 III.
 ————— various reasons, that it will be in favour of the moral capacities. Accordingly, the harmonious in human life, the beautiful in religious devotedness, may become no less attractive to the reflecting man, than the same properties as distinguishing the works of art. From the zeal for improvement also, as thus excited, though directed to very different objects, there may arise the same dissatisfaction with imperfect attainment, and in all respects the same severity of criticism. We honour the man who has struggled to separate the literature of a nation from the inroads of barbarism; or to distinguish, for the benefit of others, between the truths of science, and the pernicious dogmas of the alchymist, or of the astrologer. And it remains to be shewn, why the same reverence, at least, is not due to the man who performs a more perilous service, with the hope of exhibiting religion apart from superstition; and that because he regards the latter as the source of whatever can degrade his species, and the former as having the nearest connexion with the best discipline, both of the understanding and the heart.

His views of
 ministerial
 obligations.

Such has been the character of the most distinguished reformers of the christian religion; and such, in a peculiar degree, was the culture of the mind which led the way in the English reformation. Wycliffe's acquaintance with the compositions of devout men, and especially with the writings of inspired teachers, had contributed to place human nature before him in all the defor-

mity and ruin of its lapsed condition; and had, CHAP.
III.
at the same time, disclosed to him the moral love-
liness of the state in which it first stood, and to
which, by the influence of the gospel, it may yet
be restored. They are matters of this command-
ing character which constitute the christian doc-
trine, and if true, it is plain that it possesses
an importance, very far surpassing what may be
attached to any other portion of truth, or indeed
to all other truth. By Wycliffe, this doctrine
was contemplated with the liveliest interest, and
embraced with no feeble confidence. Hence,
while his improved understanding might be of-
fended by barbarian customs, or his humanity
by acts of oppression; his love of religion—as
of that which included whatever might most
contribute to the honour of the Deity and the
welfare of mankind—would clothe the practices
of the indolent and the worldly among the chris-
tian priesthood, with a character so revolting, as
to render his loudest reproof but the partial ut-
terance of the most honest indignation. If these
considerations are borne in mind, the reader will
not perhaps be surprised at the apparent seve-
rity of the reformer's language, when exposing
the vices of the clergy. Such men were viewed
by him, as set apart for the sole purpose of
becoming the religious instructors of the commu-
nity, and their guides to the promised immor-
tality. The shepherd, however, was often seen
resigning his flock to ignorance and destruction,
that his own passion for secular dignity, or worldly
gain, might be indulged; and to witness these

CHAP. fatal declensions, without denouncing them as in
 III. the last degree iniquitous, was, in the judgment of Wycliffe, to share in the guilt thus incurred.

In one of his earlier pieces, intitled, "A Short Rule of Life," it is thus he addresses the minister of religion: "If thou art a priest, and by name a curate, live thou a holy life. Pass other men in holy prayer, holy desire, and holy speaking; in counselling and teaching the truth. Ever keep the commandments of God, and let his gospel, and his praises, be ever in thy mouth. Ever despise sin, that men may be drawn therefrom, and that thy deeds may be so far rightful, that no man shall blame them with reason. Let thy open life be thus a true book, in which the soldier and the layman may learn how to serve God, and keep his commandments. For the example of a good life, if it be open, and continued, striketh rude men much more than open preaching with the word alone. And waste not thy goods in great feasts for rich men, but live a frugal life, on poor men's alms and goods. Have both meat, and drink, and clothing, but the remnant give truly to the poor; to those who have freely wrought, but who now may not labour from feebleness or sickness; and thus thou shalt be a true priest, both to God and to man."¹⁶ While such were the views of Wycliffe as to the obligations of the clerical

¹⁶ The above extract I have copied from a manuscript volume in the Bodleian, including numerous extracts transcribed from the reformer's writings by Dr. James. The substance of

the passage, and in the same terms, is in an early comment of Wycliffe's on the decalogue, (Cotton. MSS. Titus, D. xix. 122.) This piece will presently claim our attention.

vocation; a removal of the clergy from all secular offices, whether in the household, or in the cabinet, of the monarch, could not fail to appear to him as of the highest importance to their true reputation, and to the cause of religion. “He
 “that warreth, entangleth not himself with this
 “life,” is the language of St. Paul, and was often cited by our reformer as denoting the abstraction from worldly solitudes, which it should be the aim of christian pastors to preserve. It was his zeal, as the advocate of these and similar doctrines, which, three years later, provoked the serious displeasure of the English prelacy, and of the papal court, involving him in all the perils of a conflict with their united strength.¹⁷

The power of John of Gaunt at this time, and his known dislike of this obtrusive ambition in the higher clergy, oblige us to believe that the proposed measure was subject to his sanction; and it bears upon it a signature, which warrants our attributing it, in some degree, to the influence of a man whose genius and acquirements the duke considered as unrivalled.

¹⁷ That Wycliffe's attacks upon the clergy, were not of that indiscriminate character which has been sometimes insinuated, is evident from many of his writings. The following extract is from a piece composed about this period. “Thy second father, is thy
 “spiritual father, who has special
 “care of thy soul, and thus thou shalt
 “worship him. Thou shalt love him
 “especially before other men, and
 “obey his teaching as far as he teaches
 “God's will. And thou shalt help,
 “according to thy power, that he

“have a reasonable sustenance when
 “he doth well his office. And if he
 “fail in his office, by giving evil ex-
 “ample, and in ceasing from teaching
 “God's law, thou art bound to have
 “great sorrow on that account, and to
 “tell meekly and charitably his de-
 “fault to him between thee and him
 “alone.” — Cotton. MSS. Titus, D.
 xix. 122. If Wycliffe ever sanc-
 tioned less mild or less scriptural
 methods of reform, it was because the
 state of the malady was found to re-
 quire a severer treatment.

CHAP. The fact, also, of its being introduced while
 III.
 ——— Lancaster was absent from the kingdom, is a proof that there were leaders in the parliament of 1371, who were equally concerned to limit the attention of the clergy to the spiritualities of their office. In their petition, indeed, the members of that assembly appear to have been unanimous; and they hesitate not to specify the various offices hitherto sustained by churchmen, and which they would have vacated without delay. The language of Wycliffe on this subject is equally definite; including not only the spirit, but nearly the words of this memorable remonstrance. “Neither prelates,” he observes, “nor doctors, “priests, nor deacons, should hold secular offices, “that is, those of chancery, treasury, privy seal, “and other such secular offices in the exchequer. Neither be stewards of lands, nor stewards of the hall, nor clerks of the kitchen, nor “clerks of accounts, neither be occupied in any “secular office in lord’s courts, more especially “while secular men are sufficient to do such “offices.”¹⁸ In support of this doctrine, an appeal is made to the various writings of St. Gregory, St. Chrysostom, and St. Jerome, and to the apostolic decrees; also to the advice of St. Paul to the Corinthians, and to the solemn ad-

¹⁸ *Ecclesiæ Regimen*. Cotton. MSS. Titus, D. i. The substance of this work is no doubt the production of Wycliffe, but the copy in the British Museum has been transcribed, and in one or two instances interpolated, subsequent to his death. Much of its sentiment and language occurs

in his work on prelates, and in various other pieces. There is a second copy among the MSS. of Trinity college, Dublin. I should have examined it, but, unfortunately, it was mislaid, at the time of my connexion with that library.

monitions of the Saviour, addressed to his immediate disciples. In another treatise, he writes, CHAP.
III. that "prelates, and great religious possessioners, "are so occupied in heart about worldly lordships, and with pleas of business, that no habit "of devotion, of praying, of thoughtfulness on "heavenly things, on the sins of their own heart, "or on those of other men, may be preserved; "neither may they be found studying and preaching of the gospel, nor visiting and comforting "of poor men."¹⁹ The consequence, accordingly, of tolerating churchmen, as "rich clerks of the "chancery, of the commons' bench, and king's "bench, and the exchequer, and as justices, and "sheriffs, and stewards, and bailiffs,"²⁰ is said to be, that they become themselves so worldly, as to be in no state to reprove the worldliness of others. These opinions were propagated with so much success, that in the reformer's popular tract on the question, "Why poor priests have "no benefices," he explains this fact as arising, in a great degree, from the objections felt by the more conscientious of that order, to the practice of lay patrons, who persisted in diverting them from their proper calling, by appointing them to hold "vain offices in their courts." He states also, in the same work, and as the consequence of the general custom adverted to, that when vacancies occurred, the influence of patrons

¹⁹ MS. C. C. C. Cambridge, beginning, "For three skills lords should "constrain clerks to live in meekness, "willful poverty, and ghostly travail."

²⁰ Ibid. In exposing the worldly

business of clerks at another time, he describes them as resembling "bailiffs rather than bishops."—MS. of Feigned Contemplative Life. Dublin, class c. tab. 3. No. 12.

CHAP. was commonly employed in favour of some shrewd
III. collector of the pope's pence, or of "a kitchen
" clerk, or one wise in building castles, or in
" worldly business."²¹ In the last expression,
there is an evident reference to William of
Wykeham, the celebrated bishop of Winchester,
— a prelate whose skill in architecture and
finance had recommended him to the favour of
Edward; and whose removal from the office of
chancellor, was an event particularly contem-
plated by the novel measure adopted in the pre-
sent parliament.

On receiving this petition, the king replied,
that he would act respecting it with the advice
of his council. But in the following month,
Wykeham resigned his office of chancellor, and
the bishop of Exeter ceased to be the treasurer
of the realm. The partial success of this bold
attempt to restrict the government of the king-
dom to the hands of the laity, and to limit the
cares of the clergy to the spiritual necessities of
their flock, could not be known as in agreement
with the favourite doctrine of Wycliffe, without
exposing him to the increased resentment of his
own order. It is at this time impossible to de-
termine the extent in which the labours of our
reformer had served to produce the feeling which
gave existence, and so much effect, to a petition
that must have been regarded as deeply offensive
to churchmen. To know, however, that such a
feeling existed, would be sufficient to induce the
established clergy to associate every conceivable

²¹ MS. C. C. C. Cambridge.

mischief with the future activities of Wycliffe. CHAP.
III.
If the representatives of the English people had discovered propensities so dangerous, it was but just to conclude, that the provinces were equally impregnated with inflammable material; and the labours of this factious teacher would be seen as tending to effect the ignition of the whole.²²

It was at this period, that Wycliffe's dispute respecting the wardenship of Canterbury hall came under the notice of the king.²³ It had been submitted to the decision of the pontiff in 1367, but the definite sentence was suspended until the year 1370. The reader will scarcely be surprised to learn, that the termination of this suit was favourable to Woodhall and the monks—confirming the sentence of exclusion, which had been passed on the reformer, and on the secular scholars by Langham. That Wycliffe had derived his office from the will of the founder was unquestionable; but to bow the decrees of the living and the dead to its pleasure, had long been the practice of the papal court. It is probable that the reformer had fully anticipated this issue of

Issue of the
disputes re-
specting his
wardenship.

1370.

²² Rymer, vi. 45 Edw. III. This evil, however, was too deeply rooted to be suddenly eradicated. It is thus that Latimer deplores it as the evil of his times. "It is a thing to be lamented, that the prelates, and other spiritual persons, will not attend upon their offices. They will not be amongst their flocks, but rather will run hither and thither, here and there, where they are not called, and in the mean season leave them at adventure of whom they take their living. Yea, and furthermore,

"some would rather be clerks of the kitchen, or take other offices upon them beside that which they have already. But with what conscience these same do so, I cannot tell."—Sermons, folio, p. 171.

²³ It is singular that the name of Wycliffe does not occur in the papal document, though of considerable extent, and drawn up with no little caution. Nor is this the only suspicious circumstance connected with it.—Appendix, No. IX.

CHAP. the question. So little was he affected by it,
 III. ——— that I am not aware of a single reference to it in
 any of his writings. It may be supposed, how-
 ever, that the recollection of the event would
 sometimes sharpen his invectives, as directed
 against similar proceedings on the part of the same
 authority. His opponents, also, appear to have
 been conscious of the illegality of their triumph,
 and became seriously concerned, as the extent of
 their bribe demonstrates, to render it secure by
 obtaining a confirmation of it from the king. This
 effort, indeed, was not made until nearly two
 1372. years after the decision of the pope had been pro-
 cured; and we should not err, perhaps, in attri-
 buting the alarm which it implies, to a perception
 of Wycliffe's growing influence among his coun-
 trymen. Edward the third was now sinking
 under the infirmities of age, and still more under
 the embarrassments in which his attempts to
 possess the crown of France had involved both
 himself and the nation. Of the manner in which
 his sanction of this papal verdict was obtained,
 we are ignorant—excepting that among the means
 employed by Woodhall, and his companions, for
 that purpose, was the sum of two hundred marks.
 A donation not less considerable, may be pre-
 sumed to have facilitated the same cause in
 another court, the avarice of which had been for
 ages proverbial.²⁴

Obtains his
 degree as
 doctor in
 divinity.

Wycliffe must now have relinquished all hope

²⁴ Mr. Lewis estimates the two hun-
 dred marks at about a thousand pounds
 of our present money. C.i. Wycliffe's
 zeal as a reformer has been often de-

scribed by his enemies as arising from
 resentment under the loss of this suit.
 The falsehood is too palpable to need
 exposure.

of recovering the preferment thus wrested from him. But his genius was of a character to create other channels through which to extend its influence. In the ensuing year, he performed his novitiate for the degree of doctor in divinity. In the fourteenth century that dignity was less frequently conferred by our universities than in later times; and from the persons receiving it there was a kind of generosity expected, which failed not to commend itself to the more convivial inmates of colleges. How far Wycliffe conformed to the custom of the age in this respect we are ignorant.²⁵ His elevation to the chair of theology in the leading university of the kingdom, opened an important field for the diffusion of his opinions, and has rendered the year 1372 a memorable period in his history. From that chair many of his scholastic pieces, still extant, were doubtless read; but these, though they contributed to increase his reputation among contemporaries, and thus facilitated the progress of his more important opinions, possess, at this day, but a very limited value, even to the student of history. Among his compositions produced about this time, is an extended exposition of the decalogue; and as this work is known to the public only by its title, some extracts from it, with a general notice of its contents, may not be unacceptable to the reader; especially as it will enable him to judge of the theological opinions, and of the

CHAP.
III.

1371.

Importance
of that
event.

²⁵ Leland de Script. Brit. 379. Wood's Ann. Lewis. The paper read on the occasion adverted to, is be-

lieved to be in the imperial library of Vienna.—Baber, p. 44.

CHAP. III. devotional feeling, which the reformer brought
 ——— to the discharge of his duties as divinity professor.²⁶

Analysis of
 his expositi-
 tion of the
 decalogue.

The summary of our obligations with respect to man, and the Creator, contained in the ten precepts delivered to Moses on the mount, has formed an important part of the instruction presented in the services of the church through every age. The prominence supposed to have been given to it in the papal ritual during the middle ages, has been often appealed to as a circumstance that must have been inseparable from much moral and political benefit. It ought not, however, to be forgotten, that through that long interval, the real import of the moral law was understood but very imperfectly. During this time also the machinery of the established superstitions was artfully adjusted

²⁶ The particulars which induce me to assign this early date to the commentary referred to, are various. 1. Though extensive, it contains not the remotest reference to the controversies respecting the eucharist, or the translation of the Scriptures into the vernacular tongue; questions which, as soon as they arose, became so much the matter of discussion as to find their way into every production of the reformer's pen, which was at all extended. 2. It includes certain statements of doctrine which are much more obscured by the errors of the times, than others relating to the same points supplied by Wycliffe's subsequent writings. It should, however, be stated, that with the exception of the word purgatory, which occurs once afterwards, the only sentiments expressed in the present work, to which a modern protestant would ob-

ject, are contained in the paragraph introductory to the first precept. The writer there sanctions the use of images in less cautious terms than at a later period, and prayer to saints is not only recognized as an important exercise, but is left wholly unrestricted. Two years from this time, Wycliffe was called to the continent, and in a homily which appears to have been composed immediately after his return, he condemns the practice of offering prayer to any saint, whose admission to heaven is not affirmed in the scriptures, and discloses a suspicion as to the real utility of such services, even when referring to such persons —Bib. Reg. 18. b. 14. Ecclesiæ Regimen. art. 10. A little subsequently, the entire practice was discountenanced as the offspring of folly, and as diverting the mind from the "One Mediator."—*Dialogus*, iii. 30.

to deprive the precept of nearly all its power, by disclosing innumerable means of escape from its penalty. We learn, indeed, from the prologue to the commentary now referred to, that in the fourteenth century, it was no rare event for men “to call God, master, forty, three score, or four score years; and yet to be ignorant of his ten commandments.” To induce an attention to the divine precepts, Wycliffe reminds his reader, “that poor and helpless as he had entered the world, he must soon depart from it, having nothing with him but his good deeds or his wicked.” The latter also, he forcibly describes as leading “to the pains of hell,” and the former, as connecting the nature of man with “the high bliss of heaven.” “We should be diligent,” he observes, “to learn the love of God, and to fear him, and to worship him passing all things in this world. But this may we not do, without seriously learning the law of God, and his commandments. Hence, there is full great need to hear the commandments of God read, and preached, and taught, and so to learn them, and do after them, as God hath bidden on pain of damnation. But what man is there now-a-days who feareth to break God’s commandments, or setteth any prize by the sweetest word in all God’s law? Dear God! it is a wonder of all the wonders on earth, that from the beginning of our life, even to our last end, we are never weary, either night or day, in labouring for worldly goods, pleasing to our wretched body,

CHAP.
III.

CHAP. III. — “which shall here last but a little season; while
“about the learning of God’s law, which shall be
“food and nourishment for our souls, that either
“in bliss or pain shall ever last — about such
“things, may we not labour truly to the end, for
“one hour of the day!” This thoughtlessness with
respect to religion, he deplores as observable “for
“the most part through all the world,” not ex-
cepting “lord bishops, parsons, vicars, priests,
“and friars.”

In his explanation of the first precept, sensuality, covetousness, and pride, are particularly noticed, as opposed to the homage and the love so justly demanded by the Creator. It then follows: “if a man will keep this commandment,
“he must believe stedfastly, that Almighty God
“in Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy
“Ghost, three persons in one God, are the noblest
“object that may have being,—all power, all wit,
“all wisdom, all mercy, all charity, and all good-
“ness, being in him, and coming of him. Also,
“thou must fear God above all things in this world,
“and break his commandments for the sake of
“no worldly good; also, thou must love God above
“all things, and thy neighbour as thyself; labour-
“ing diligently to understand the law of God,
“especially his ten commandments, and watching
“that thy will be so regulated, that it may accord
“with God’s will. Have a remembrance, too, of
“the goodness of God, how he made thee in his
“own likeness, and how Jesus Christ, both God
“and man, died so painful a death upon the cross,

“to buy man’s soul out of hell, even with his own
 “heart’s blood, and to bring it to the bliss of
 “heaven!”

CHAP.
 III.

While such are the motives by which the love of God is enforced, on the second commandment he remarks, that “all who would be called
 “christians, while they live contrary to the living
 “and teaching of Christ and his apostles, take
 “God’s name in vain: for it is in vain, that
 “a man say he is a christian man, and do nothing
 “of the works of Christ.” Perjury and profane swearing are loudly censured as violations of this precept. The iniquity of the former is said to be, that it makes the God of truth, an abettor of falsehood; the latter is noticed as opposed to certain canons, which menaced the offending clerk with the loss of his dignity, and the layman with excommunication. But the writer appeals with greater solemnity to the language of the Saviour, in his sermon on the mount. This he delivers as “Christ’s
 “own words in his gospel,” and immediately adds, “therefore for the love of Christ, who for you
 “shed his blood, beware henceforth, night and
 “day, of your oath’s swearing.” His replies to certain excuses, which were urged to extenuate this vice, present a fair specimen of his more popular style of reasoning. Thus it was stated as proper, to have God always in remembrance; and hence it was said to be a less fault to use his name somewhat irreverently, than that it should seem to be treated with neglect. This shallow pretext he compares to the conduct of a subject, who should make a virtue of frequently repeating

CHAP. the name "of a just prince, though it might be
 III. "to betray him, or to teach others to despise him."

When the practice is vindicated as the effect of habit, the plea is coupled with that of a thief, who should appeal to his confirmed love of depredation as an extenuation of some particular offence. It is admitted that God is merciful, but when it is inferred, that "he will not therefore damn men "for a light oath," the partial view of the divine attributes and government which the conclusion implies, is thus solemnly exposed: "Since God "is so great a Lord, and commandeth his liege "man, on pain of hell without end, to keep so easy "a command as refraining his tongue from vain "and false swearing, is he not worthy to be "damned the deeper, if he break it? It was little "in Adam to eat an apple in paradise, considered "apart from the bidding of God. Nevertheless, "for the eating it against the forbidding of God, "he and all mankind were justly condemned, "until Christ bought them again, with his precious blood, and hard death upon the cross!" The assertion, that to swear, was necessary to be believed, is disposed of with equal effect; and here it is especially regretted, that at a period when almost every sentence uttered by men was an oath, this impiety remained unchecked, even among the servants and retainers of the prelates themselves, though an order of men ordained to teach the law of God, and to see it enforced. "Certainly," he exclaims, "it is a wonder, "apart from the endless mercy of God, that the "earth openeth not, and swalloweth them quick

“into hell, for this treason and others be-
“side.”²⁷

CHAP.
III.

On the third commandment, he remarks, that the sabbath is a day that should be spent “in three manners of occupations.” These occupations are explained, as including devout meditation, public worship, and the works of charity. His maxims on the last named division of christian duty, bespeak the kindness of his heart; and must have given a marked peculiarity to the manners of his followers, if truly adopted by them. His instructions in relation to public worship, require the most humiliating acknowledgments of guilt, and of spiritual helplessness, and urge the worshipper in his approaches to God, “to cry heartily unto him for grace and succour.” To aid the reflections of the devout mind, during the hours of this sacred day, he enjoins that it be then especially remembered, “that God is almighty — Why? — Because he made all this world of nought. That he is all-wise — Why? — Because he governs most wisely all things.

²⁷ The piety of Wycliffe appears to have been particularly shocked by the profanity of the times in this respect. It is thus that he again appeals to such offenders: “But how shalt thou, sinful wretch, dare stand before Christ at the dreadful day of doom, while his hands, his side, his feet, and his wounds are all open and bloody, and wait to be saved at that dreadful season in virtue of Christ’s name, and of his hard wounds, which name and wounds thou hast so customarily and horribly despised all

“thy life, in idle swearing.”—Ibid. In his treatise on prelates, (C.C.C. Cambridge, MS.) the reformer has numbered among the sins of this class of men, that they were wont to swear, and in the presence of others, by “the heart, and bones, and nails, and other members of Christ.” From the record of William Thorp’s examination before archbishop Arundel, it appears, that the official language of primates was not unfrequently interlarded with such asseverations.—Fox, i. 689.

CHAP. III. "That he is all-good — Why? — Because he
"maketh all things turn to the profit of good men,
"who faithfully love him. That he is all-just—
"Why?—Because he rewardeth all good deeds,
"and punishes all trespasses in due time, and in
"due measure, both secret and open; neither
"may any creature resist his punishing, whether
"in earth, in purgatory, or in hell. That he is
"all-merciful—Why?—Because he is readier to
"receive sinful men to grace, that would truly
"leave their sins, than they are to ask mercy."
His reader is then admonished, that the sabbath
is not so much commemorative of the work of
creation, as of the resurrection of Christ, and of
the gift of the Spirit; and it is then added, "be-
"think thee heartily of the wonderful kindness
"of God, who was so high and so worshipful in
"Heaven, that he should come down so low,
"and be born of the maiden, and become our
"brother, to buy us again, by his hard passion,
"from our thralldom to Satan. He was beaten,
"and buffeted, and scourged, so that there was
"not left a whole spot of his skin, but all his
"body was as one stream of blood. He was
"crowned with a crown of thorns for despite;
"and when the crown, as some writers say,
"would not set fast down to his head, for the long
"thorns, they took staves and beat them down,
"until the thorns pierced the place of the brain.
"He was then nailed, hand and foot, with sharp
"nails and rugged, that his pain might be the
"more, and so at last he suffered a painful death,
"hanging full shamefully on the hard tree! And

“ all this he did and suffered of his own kindness,
“ without any sin of himself, that he might de-
“ liver us from sin and pain, and bring us to
“ everlasting bliss. Thou shouldst also think
“ constantly, how, when he had made thee of
“ nought, thou hadst forsaken him, and all his
“ kindness, through sin, and hadst taken thee to
“ Satan and his service, world without end, had
“ not Christ, God and man, suffered this hard
“ death to save us. And thus see the great kind-
“ ness, and all other goodness, which God hath
“ shewn for thee; and thereby learn thy own
“ great unkindness; and thus, thou shalt see,
“ that man is the most fallen of creatures, and
“ the unkindest of all the creatures that ever
“ God made! It should be full sweet and de-
“ lightful to us to think thus on this great kind-
“ ness, and this great love of Jesus Christ!”

It is under the influence of such reflections, that Wycliffe calls on men to become active “ on the
“ sabbath about the soul, as on other days about
“ the body;” requiring of each, that he should
“ evermore think on his own sin, and on the
“ shortness and falseness of this wicked world.”

On the next precept, it is observed, that the honour rendered to parents, should be extended to the christian pastor, as a spiritual father, and to the Creator, as “ the best of all,” and as the being for whom men should be prepared to make any sacrifice, or endure “ any death.” The prohibition, “ Thou shalt not kill,” is said to be violated, not only by the deed of blood, but by depriving men of their character, or regarding

CHAP. them with hatred.²⁸ There is much strength of
 III. reasoning, and of reproof, in his comment on these precepts; and the same is observable in his treatment of that relating to the vices of impurity. He states also, that “in many places, neither “priests nor clerks, wedded nor single, may keep “themselves” from such offences. To aid men in resisting temptations of this nature, many things are suggested. The tempted are reminded particularly, that the passion of Christ is designed to save them from sin, and “that God is “every where present, and seeth most clearly “all things, and is more willing to help those “who are in trouble, and truly seek after his “help, than they are ready to desire it, be they “never so fervent; and that God, of his condescension and truth, will not suffer man to be “tempted more than he may bear, and with “God’s grace overcome.”

Some extracts might with propriety be made from the comment on the remaining precepts, but the observations at the close of the treatise are too characteristic to be omitted. “Therefore “covet not thy neighbour’s goods, despise him “not, slander him not, deceive him not, scorn

²⁸ It is thus that he assails the frequent crime of manslaughter. “How “shall he be hardy to stand before “God, who has slain a son of God? “It is a wonder how any man dare “destroy the creature whom God hath “made in his own likeness. If a “craftsman has so great a love for his “work that he may not suffer it to be “lost, how much, guess you, that God “loveth the creature he hath made in

“his own likeness?”—Ibid. The deed is farther interpreted as a despising and scorning of the passion and painful death of Jesus Christ, who died to save men’s lives “unto the bliss of “heaven.”—Ibid. It was the worth of human nature, as arising from these facts, which rendered Wycliffe so much the foe of war, and so much devoted to the religious welfare of men.

“ him not, belie him not, backbite him not—the CHAP.
III.
 “ which is a common custom now-a-days—and ———
 “ so in all other things do no otherwise than
 “ thou wouldst reasonably that he did to thee.
 “ But many think if they give a penny to a par-
 “ doner, they shall be forgiven the breaking of
 “ all the commandments of God, and, therefore,
 “ they take no heed how they keep them. But,
 “ I say thee, for certain, though thou have priests
 “ and friars to sing for thee, and though thou
 “ each day hear many masses, and found chaun-
 “ tries and colleges, and go on pilgrimages all thy
 “ life, and give all thy goods to pardoners; all this
 “ shall not bring thy soul to heaven. While if the
 “ commandments of God are revered to the end,
 “ though neither penny nor halfpenny be pos-
 “ sessed, there shall be everlasting pardon, and
 “ the bliss of heaven!” The reader is, in conclu-
 sion, admonished, that to suffer for Christ can be
 no hard requirement, since he has so greatly
 suffered for us; and an appeal is made to the
 scenes through which apostles, and confessors,
 and martyrs, have passed to their present exalta-
 tion, as an inducement to bear the evils of time
 with resignation, and to count them no small
 honour, if endured in the cause of the gospel.

From these extracts, a correct judgment may
 be formed of Wycliffe's opinions in theology, at
 the period of commencing his divinity lectures
 among the students of Oxford. The doctrines
 which have been in general regarded as forming
 the distinguishing truths of the christian reve-
 lation, were evidently the favourite portion of his

CHAP. III. creed. Thus we find him zealously inculcating
—— the lessons of inspiration on the fall of man, and the consequent depravity of human nature; on the excellence and perpetual obligation of the moral law; on the exclusive dependence of every child of Adam, for the remission of his sins, on the atonement of Christ; and for victory over temptation, and the possession of holiness, on the aids of divine grace. It has appeared also, that these momentous tenets were very far from being regarded with the coldness of mere speculation. On the contrary, in the experience of Wycliffe, they are found united with those feelings of gratitude and humility, with that lowly and hallowed confidence in God, and with those refined pleasures of devotion, which they so directly tend to produce. With him, to use his own nervous language, the love of God was an exercise of soul, “full of reason.” If his lectures from the professor’s chair were somewhat less devotional, or less marked by practical detail, than the treatise which we have now examined, it will be but just to assume, that his statements on such occasions were in perfect consistency with the doctrine avowed in his more popular compositions. It should be remarked also, that the doctrine announced by Wycliffe, with respect to the divine favour, as certainly pertaining, and as alone pertaining, to the worshipper whose reliance on the grace of the Redeemer had produced the love of God and of his commandments, was one of no small importance. It will appear, indeed, in the course of this narrative, that the independence of

every priestly mystery, which was thus main-
tained, was to prove the essential, and the most
efficient means of our religious emancipation.²⁹

CHAP.
III.

²⁹ I avail myself of this space to remind the reader, that the term "law" and the phrase "the law of God," frequently occurring in the theological productions of the fourteenth century, and especially in those of Wycliffe,

are often to be understood as referring, not merely to the preceptive portions of the Scriptures, but to the whole sum of divine revelation. Such was the manner of the Old Testament writers.

CHAP.
IV.
Popes in
England, on
the move-
ment of the
world, and
the Church.

CHAPTER IV.

STATE OF THE PAPAL INFLUENCE IN ENGLAND ON THE ACCESSION OF EDWARD THE THIRD.—COMPLAINTS RESPECTING IT.—STATUTE AGAINST PROVVISORS, AND THAT OF PREMUNIRE.—EMBASSY TO THE PAPAL COURT.—FAVOURABLE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THIS PERIOD IMPROVED BY WYCLIFFE.—INQUIRY CONCERNING THE NUMBER OF ALIEN BENEFICES IN ENGLAND.—A SECOND EMBASSY TO THE PAPAL COURT, INCLUDING THE NAME OF WYCLIFFE.—BRUGES, THE SEAT OF NEGOTIATION.—NOTICE OF THAT CITY.—WYCLIFFE WITH THE DUKE OF LANCASTER AT BRUGES.—RESULT OF HIS EMBASSY.—ITS PROBABLE INFLUENCE ON HIS SENTIMENTS.—HE IS PROMOTED BY THE KING TO THE PREBEND OF AUST, AND TO THE RECTORY OF LUTTERWORTH.—PROCEEDINGS OF THE GOOD PARLIAMENT.—THE REFORMER IS ACCUSED OF TEACHING DANGEROUS OPINIONS.—HIS APPEARANCE BEFORE THE BISHOP OF LONDON.—DEATH OF EDWARD THE THIRD.—MEASURES OF RICHARD'S FIRST PARLIAMENT.—ITS APPEAL TO THE JUDGMENT OF WYCLIFFE.—HIS REPLY.

CHAP.
IV.

Papal influence in England, on the accession of Edward the third.

IN the introductory portion of this work, we have noticed the frequent disputes between the successors of our first William, and the Roman prelates. The object of this struggle was to determine the limits of the monarchical and pontifical power with respect to the persons and property of the English clergy, and even of the English people.¹ That feudal homage which had been spurned by the pride of the Conqueror, we have seen extorted, after an interval of nearly two centuries, from the weakness of John; and we have marked

¹ C. iii. sect. i.

the avaricious application of the political and religious usurpation which was thus brought to its climax. From that period the pontiffs frequently assert their will to be above all law, whether affecting the church or the state; and in their various exactions, they appear to have been rarely impeded by any restraints arising from the sentiments of justice or pity. Hence, while our monarchs were readily absolved from their vows, with respect to Magna Charta, the emoluments of the English hierarchy were conferred with a shameless profusion on the creatures of the papal court. Against this system of tyranny and depredation, some loud remonstrances were offered; but promises of amendment were no sooner made than forgotten; and on the accession of Edward the third, the nation, if less exposed to the ambition of the popes than in some preceding reigns, was not less impoverished by those devices which were meant to replenish the papal treasury.

It was in the sixteenth year of Edward the third, that the recently elected pontiff, Clement the sixth, declared the two next vacancies in the Anglican church, amounting to the annual value of two thousand marks, to be, by provision, the property of two among his cardinals. The moment was unfavourable to such a demand, and the language of complaint which had been uttered by the nobles and the commons under preceding sovereigns was now repeated, and was enforced by the sincere concurrence of the monarch. Edward, in his letter to the pope, distinctly states that the custom of provisors had transferred the

CHAP.
IV.

Occasions
loud com-
plaint.
1343.

CHAP. IV. property designed for the support of religion, to
 ——— the hands of men who neither dwelt in the country nor understood its language, and who were alike unable and unwilling to discharge the duties of their office; and adding, that the jurisdiction of his courts had been in various particulars impaired by this practice, it is described as at variance alike with the royal prerogative, the right of the chapters, and that of patrons in general. The evils thus stated are also declared to be insufferable; and viewed as the natural consequence of the novel practice of providing for benefices before they were vacant, it is required that the custom of provisors be instantly abolished. In support of this claim, it is remarked, that the commission of the popes, as derived from St. Peter, is evidently to befriend the church, and not to oppress it; to feed, and not to impoverish, the flock of Christ.²

But the redress of these grievances, though thus firmly demanded, was demanded in vain. Hence, it devolved on the king and the parliament, in the year 1350, to attempt the protection of the country from this system of relentless fraud, by the celebrated statute against “provisors,” and three years later by another enactment, equally known by the name “premunire.” The first declared the collation to any dignity or benefice, in a manner opposed to the rights of the king, the chapters, or its patrons, to be void—subjecting the parties concerned in every such

Statutes of
 provisors
 and premunire.

1350.

² Wals. 161. Collier, i. 546, 547, 554.

offence, to fine and imprisonment, and prohibiting appeal, beyond the court of the sovereign. The second statute was directed against the growing custom of transferring questions in relation to property, from the decision of the English courts to the re-judgment of the pontiffs—exposing all such offenders in future, to heavy fines, and to imprisonment at the king's will.³ The rigorous enforcement of the latter provision was highly beneficial; but, from many subsequent facts, it is evident that the former imposed but a feeble check on the evils which it was intended to remove.

CHAP.
IV.

In 1373 the English parliament is still complaining of the evils arising from papal provisions, and they are even said to be more oppressive than at any former period. To save the property of the realm, and to silence the continued murmurs of his subjects, Edward commissioned Gilbert, bishop of Bangor, Bolton, a monk of Dunholm, and William de Burton and John de Shepey, to state to the pope the discontent which his conduct had excited through the nation. Gregory the eleventh, who then filled the papal chair, resided at Avignon, and to him it was delivered as the claim of Edward and of the English people, “that the pontiff should desist from the reservation of benefices in the Anglican church; that the clergy should henceforth freely enjoy their election to episcopal dignities; and that it might be sufficient, in the case of electing

Embassy
to the papal
court.

³ 25, 27, Edw. III.

CHAP. "a bishop, that his appointment should be
IV.

"confirmed by his metropolitan, as was the
"ancient custom."⁴ To this remonstrance, some
partial concessions were made; but they were so
far defective, or made with so little appearance of
sincerity, that in the parliament of the same year
a petition was presented, which implored that
some remedy should be devised against the pro-
visors of the popes, and against other novel cus-
toms, which had drained the land of its wealth
to an extent that could be no longer endured.
An act was accordingly passed, with a view to
protect the community from these rapacious
encroachments of the head of the church; and
one which, by declaring the election of bishops to
be completely independent of the papal sanction,
became a law, affecting the spiritual as well as
the temporal supremacy assumed by the pontiffs.⁵

Circum-
stances fa-
vourable to
ecclesiasti-
cal reform.

The partialities of the Avignon popes, and of
their conclaves, to the interest of France, were
too well known at this period, not to have a
considerable influence on the popular feeling in
England. Under any circumstances, the most
general notion of equity, or the mere selfishness
of human nature, would have been sufficient to
render the practices adverted to a matter of serious
regret. But to view the kingdom as subject
to this exhausting process, and chiefly that her
wealth might be transferred to aid the resources
of her most powerful adversary, was inseparable
from indignant feeling and bitter complaint. It

⁴ Barnes's Edward III. 864. Lewis,
c. iii.

⁵ Cotton's Abridgment, 119. Barnes,
864.

was at this crisis of the popular feeling that the labours of Wycliffe would become particularly efficient. His zeal and learning were applied to demonstrate, that the authority assumed by the pontiffs, and by many of the national clergy, with respect to the affairs of states, and ecclesiastical property, was in most instances usurpation, and a wide departure from the maxims which had been revered by the christian priesthood in the better ages of the church. He, at the same time, laboured to show, that the effort of the commons to reform spiritual grievances, was neither novel nor obtrusive, but a legitimate exercise of power. It is also observable, that in the various complaints preferred by that body, with respect to such matters, nothing can be less apparent than a feeling of suspicion as to the propriety of entering upon the ground which they had taken. On the contrary, the popes are plainly regarded as the centre of a body of men, who, under the garb of a sanctified vocation, were living to the indulgence of every worldly passion. So inveterate, too, was this disease considered, that all hope of recovery, as arising from the proper source, appears to have been relinquished. But what the priest refused to attempt, the magistrate was determined to accomplish.

It was this state of popular excitement which suggested the importance of instant inquiry as to the exact number and value of the alien benefices in the church of England.⁶ Possessed

CHAP.
IV.

Improved
by Wycliffe.

Inquiries
concerning
the number
of alien
benefices.

1374.

⁶ Fox. Acts and Monuments, i. 561, 562, where the reader may perceive something of the pastoral solicitude

which guided the Avignon popes in the disposal of English benefices.

CHAP. of the certain information which this investigation
 IV. had supplied, it was resolved by the parliament of 1374, to choose certain delegates, who should once more convey their remonstrance to the pontiff.

A second embassy to the pope, including the name of Wycliffe.

The first name in the list of persons so appointed, is that of a prelate who had been employed on the previous commission ; the second, is that of our reformer.⁷ It will presently appear, that in the opening of 1377, Wycliffe stood before the English prelates accused of publishing opinions which shook every secular pretension of the hierarchy ; and which were no less hostile to that theory of spiritual power, from which the worldly influence of the clergy had been mainly derived. These opinions, however, which he is then accused of having for some time promulgated, must have been published before the close of 1374, as the subsequent interval was passed upon the continent. It follows, therefore, that to the parliament which thus required his appearance as an advocate in behalf of the king and the people, his novelties of opinion could hardly have been unknown. But the negotiation with which our reformer's name became thus associated, was not to be conducted at the papal residence. And from what is known of Rome during the middle ages, it was certainly politic to prevent enlightened men from too nearly observing the manners which generally prevailed among the nearest dependants on the successors of St. Peter.⁸ Wycliffe

⁷ See Appendix, No. X.

⁸ Grossteste carried some of his complaints to the court of the pontiff,

but returned to England in a somewhat gloomy mood. — Paris, 802.
 " Tired with the mal-administration

could hardly have doubted that the corruptions which he so much deplored in the members of the church, were to be traced in no small measure to its head. But hitherto he had seen much more of the streams than of the fountain; and for this reason, we may almost regret that the meeting of the delegates was arranged to take place at Bruges, and not at Avignon.

The former city, however, was one of vast extent, and possessed considerable interest. Its name had been derived from a bridge connected with it; its foundation is attributed to the year 760; and its fortifications rose somewhat more than a century later. When commerce had extended her numerous towns over the provinces of Germany and Flanders, the wealth which was thus acquired, became an allurements too great to be always withstood by the undisciplined passions of the powerful. The prelates, on whom the government of various cities devolved, with the title of imperial vicars, were generally unpopular; and the local nobility—who appear to have been as much disposed to illegal exaction and private rapine, as to political feuds and the sports of the field—were not less the objects of suspicion. Many real dangers were no doubt felt as arising from piracy and invasion. But we can easily conceive, that such evils would be shrewdly magnified by these maritime republics, so as to give the most plausible appearance to the industry with

CHAP.
IV.

Notice of
Bruges at
this period.

“ and mercenariness of the Roman
“ see, he left Rome and returned into
“ England, and being dissatisfied with
“ the state of the English church, at

“ his arrival, he designed to quit his
“ bishopric, and to retire for study
“ and devotion.”—Collier, i. 458.

CHAP.
IV.
—

Its con-
nexion with
the Hansea-
tic league.

which they laboured to protect their dwellings and their property from the probable approach of an enemy. It was certainly to protect the wealth and independence which had been the reward of their ingenuity and toil, that these commercial fraternities mingled in one friendly alliance, constituting the famous Hanseatic league. This body, sometimes soliciting the secret, and sometimes the open protection of the sovereign, maintained its stand through several centuries, not only against the most formidable combinations of pirates, but against the lawless pride of many a local aristocracy, and often against the spiritual weapons of the church. The formation of this memorable union is dated from the middle of the thirteenth century. Its existence may, perhaps, be traced to an earlier period; but it then assumed a definite form, admitting such towns only to its securities, as were in possession of their own keys, and free in the exercise of their civil jurisdiction. By this league, which in 1370 included more than sixty cities, an enviable distinction was conferred on Bruges. From arrangements made in 1262, that city soon became the emporium of Europe; uniting, as the consequence of its locality, and from the imperfect state of navigation, the growing traffic of the Baltic, and the ancient commerce of the Mediterranean and the east. In an assembly of 1361, six hundred of the Bruges ladies are said to have excelled the queen of France in the costliness of their attire, and to the avowed mortification of royal vanity. With this taste for splendour, the spirit of civil freedom,

which every where rose with that of commercial CHAP.
enterprise, was so far connected as to impart to IV.
the manners of the Bruges citizens a self-con-
fidence and fearlessness which passed with the
more patient victims of feudal tyranny for pre-
sumption and insolence.⁹

There was much in such a state of society to interest the mind of Wycliffe. Those luxurious habits, indeed, and that love of finery which had long characterized the population before him, could not have been regarded with pleasure by a mind of his severe complexion. But the steady resistance presented by the citizens of Bruges to every oppressive exaction, whether proceeding from their civil or their ecclesiastical rulers, must have excited his admiration. From the same feeling, as in progress among his countrymen, his present commission had arisen; and that he returned increasingly zealous to strengthen and mature it, is no matter of conjecture.

It should be noticed also, that during his stay in that city, it became the seat of negotiation between the ambassadors of France and England, under the mediation of the archbishop of Ravenna, and the bishop of Carpentras, as the representatives of the pope. The dukes of Anjou and Burgundy, brothers of the sovereign, were delegates on the part of France; and the claims of England were entrusted to the earl of Salisbury, Sudbury, (then bishop of London,) and the duke of Lancaster.¹⁰ The character in which Wycliffe appeared at

Wycliffe
and the
duke of
Lancaster at
Bruges.

⁹ Anderson's History of Commerce,
i. 57, 85, 225, 253, 268.

¹⁰ Rymer, vii. 49 Edw. III. Feb. 20.
Jan. 27.

CHAP. Bruges, would secure him access to these ambas-
 IV. ——— sadors from the most formidable powers of the
 age, and would lead to a more intimate knowledge
 of the intrigues which have been too commonly
 admitted into the policy of states, and of the
 church. Such lessons might not be pleasing, but
 to acquire them was important.

Result of
 the embassy.

Our information respecting the progress of the
 negotiation which chiefly claimed the attention
 of Wycliffe is imperfect. It is certain that he
 arrived at Bruges near the month of August, in
 1374; and under the date of September, 1375, we
 find six bulls addressed to the English monarch by
 the pontiff, and treating of questions then at issue
 between this nation and the papacy.¹¹ In these
 documents it was provided, that no person at
 present in possession of a benefice in England,
 should be disturbed by any interference of the
 pope's authority; that the reservation of bene-
 fices which had been declared by Urban the fifth,
 and were not yet acted upon, should be annulled;
 that the titles of certain clergymen which had
 been questioned by the late pope, should be con-
 firmed, remitting also the demand of their first
 fruits; and that an assessment of the revenues of
 certain cardinals, holding livings in England,
 should be made, to effect a repair of their churches,
 and other ecclesiastical buildings, which had fallen
 into decay—the extent of such assessment to be
 determined by the verdict of a jury convened
 in the neighbourhood. To protract the contro-
 versy which tended toward an unfavourable result,

¹¹ Rymer, vii. 49 Edw. III. Sept. 1.

was a conspicuous maxim in the policy of the court of Rome, and one that proved of much importance to its cause. It not unfrequently happened, that a short interval placed the appellants in circumstances widely altered; so that a decision which it would have been unwise to have avowed at once, was often announced without danger at a later period. In such cases the pontiffs commonly attributed their delay to the serious difficulties of the questions before them; and when obliged to make some communications respecting them, it was frequently merely to gain time or to ascertain the effect of evasion. Thus, in the letters addressed to Edward the third, after a delay of more than twelve months, there was no surrender of pontifical claims. The reservation of benefices; the demand of first fruits, from such as became vacant; and some other obnoxious customs, were relinquished so far only as they stood connected with the authority of Urban. The silence of his successor with respect to such points, as they might become involved in his own conduct, discovers plainly, that every *principle* in the system of usurpation so loudly censured, was still regarded as unalienable. That such were the views entertained of the papal letters in England, may be inferred from the continuance of the embassy which produced them. From a reply of Edward to a petition of the parliament convened in the April of the following year, it appears that the royal commissioners were still prosecuting their instructions in behalf of the English church.¹² But

1376.

¹² Cotton's Abridgment, Ann.

CHAP. the aged monarch was rapidly declining ; his
IV. — continental influence was almost annihilated ; and
faction had made considerable inroads on the
domestic policy of his kingdom. Aided by these
circumstances, Gregory the eleventh contrived to
retain his authority unimpaired, consenting only to
a partial restriction of it, and to that restriction
upon such conditions only as might soon be made
to furnish a pretext for resuming whatever he had
appeared to surrender. It was agreed, that for
the future the pope should desist from the reser-
vation of benefices ; but it was also required, that
the king should no more confer them by his writ,
“ *quare impedit.*” This concession, which regards
the authority of the pontiffs, in relation to the
offices and emoluments of the Anglican church, as
at least the equal of what pertained to the sove-
reign, is the amount of the redress obtained by a
negotiation of two years’ continuance. The official
confirmation of episcopal and abbatical elections,
which had been assumed by the popes, was
among the matters of complaint on the part of
the English commissioners ; but it was a custom
which involved too much to gratify both the ava-
rice and the ambition of the pontiffs not to be
obstinately retained. Gilbert, on whom the con-
ducting of this embassy principally devolved, was
translated immediately after his return to the see
of Hereford ; and, in 1389, to that of St. David’s ;
and as his advancement, in both instances, was
the fruit of papal provisions, it is obvious that in
his case, at least, the objects of this embassy had
been committed to improper hands.

Wycliffe, who probably regarded the extent of the claims which he was called to advocate, as including but a part of what might, with equal justice, have been preferred, was more than disgusted by this result of the protracted negotiation. Such, also, was the developement of papal sanctity, which had arisen out of his discussions with the envoys of the pontiff, that his rebukes, which hitherto had been directed toward the head of the church but distantly and by implication, are applied in that quarter, soon after this time, with unsparing severity. The popes he learnt, ere long, to regard as men, whose elevation served but to diffuse more widely the pestilence of an example all-surpassing in its worldliness and avarice. The covetousness and the secular ambition, which had so successfully claimed the reputation of a zeal for piety, were stripped of their disguise; and the stimulus thus imparted to his spirit of inquiry, will be found to give a wider extent, and a more determined character to his efforts as opposed to the abounding corruptions.¹³

CHAP.
IV.

Its influence on the sentiments of Wycliffe.

The duke of Lancaster embarked at Bourdeaux, for England, on the eighth of July, 1376, and we have no evidence that Wycliffe left Bruges at an earlier period. But, during his absence, the reformer had received the most unequivocal proof, that the respect entertained for his character by his sovereign was in no way diminished. In November, 1375, he was presented by the king to the

His promotions.

¹³ The papal nuncios on this occasion were Benedict, bishop of Pampe-luna, Radulf, bishop of Senigaglia, and

Giles Sancho, provost of the church of Valenza.—Barnes's Edward the Third, 886.

CHAP. IV. prebend of Aust, in the collegiate church of Westbury, in the diocese of Worcester. About the same period, the rectory of Lutterworth, in Leicestershire, became vacant. Lord Henry de Ferars, the patron, was then a minor; it in consequence devolved upon the crown to appoint the next incumbent, and the royal patronage was again exercised in favour of Wycliffe.¹⁴

Proceedings
of the good
parliament.

The interval, however, which had brought preferment to the reformer, had involved the duke of Lancaster in a political struggle which embittered the remainder of his life. While the career of Edward and his sons was such as to gratify the vanity of the nation, the selfishness of popular feeling was in a good degree manageable. But the scale of prosperity had recently turned in favour of the enemy. The measures of government, as the usual consequence, began to be less acceptable; and the duke of Lancaster, on whom, from the age of the king, and the sickness of the heir-apparent, the cares of the administration chiefly devolved, found himself exposed to much of the growing petulance and prejudice. The prince of Wales may have had some real objection

¹⁴ The following entry, though relating to Wycliffe's successor in the rectory of Lutterworth, determines the source of his promotion, and the day of his death. "Johan. de Morhouse, presbyter per Dominum Henr. de Ferrariis de Groby ad Eccle. de Lutterworth. Inquisitores dicunt, quod dicta Ecclesia incepit vacare ultimo dei Decem. ultimo præteriti (1384) per mortem Joannis Wycliff ultimi rectoris ejusdem. Item,

"dicunt, quod Dominus Henricus de Ferrariis de Groby est verus patronus, et quod dominus noster Edwardus tertius Rex, ratione minoris ætatis dicti Domini Henrici de Ferrariis dictum Dominum Johannem Wycliff ultimo presentavit ad eadem. Dictus Johannes Morhouse admissus est."—8 Kal. Febru. 1384. Reg. Bokyaghams, c. col. Ep. Kennet. MS. Lewis, c. iii. p. 44.

to the official conduct of his brother ; it is certain, CHAP.
IV.
 that at this crisis, the name of the heir-apparent

 was connected with measures which were designed to render John of Gaunt the object of disaffection among the people.¹⁵ But the history of the parliament which thus distinguished itself, is involved in no little obscurity. Courtney, bishop of London, and Wykeham of Winchester, with others among its leading members, were men whose feelings are known to have been at the farthest remove from the spirit of democracy. At the same time, the attack conducted by the house of commons, during this session, on various branches of official corruption, is one of the most determined efforts in the cause of religion, and of general freedom, to be found in our parliamentary annals. To account for the agreement of parties so opposite, in the decisive measures adopted, it has been supposed, that the prelates above named, and their adherents, descended to employ the popular influence, as their best protection in supplanting the existing administration ; and that while it was known that some severe complaints, with respect to the corruptions of the church, must in consequence be allowed to reach the presence of the king, it was secretly arranged that they should there be rendered ineffectual.¹⁶ This view of the event, though not without its difficulties, removes the greater number of the perplexities connected with it. In its proceedings, the charges preferred

¹⁵ Yet the name of Lancaster is inserted in terms of affection in the list of his eldest brother's exe-

cutors. — Testamenta Vestusta. ubi supra.

¹⁶ Godwin's Life of Chaucer, c. xxix.

CHAP. during this session against the servants of the
 IV. crown, were followed in several instances by confiscation and imprisonment. Among the principal sufferers were lord Latimer, the known friend of the duke of Lancaster; and Alice Perers, a female who, after the death of Philippa, is said to have acquired an improper influence over the king, and to have added to the usual intrigues of a court, the effrontery, in some instances, of publicly impeding the course of justice. The expulsion of Latimer, from the royal council, is said to be for ever; and the punishment of Alice Perers, who was no doubt greatly calumniated, appears to have consisted in forfeiture, and a prohibition from approaching the person of the sovereign.¹⁷ It is enough, however, to know the relation in which Latimer stood to John of Gaunt; and that Edward retained the obnoxious female near him to the closing moments of his life; to be assured that the leaders in the parliament of 1376, were men whose conduct was scarcely more agreeable to the monarch than to his second son. But imperfect as our notices are respecting the secret history of that convention, it has been justly remarked, that the policy adopted “in employing “the house of commons as an engine of attack

¹⁷ Walsingham appears to have recorded every malicious rumour he could learn respecting this woman. Sir Robert Cotton, however, remarks, that “the record against the said “dame being very long, proveth no “such heinous matter against her, “and these two suits wherefore she “was condemned, seemed very honest;

“but mishap, she was friendly to “many, but all were not so to her,” (1 Ric. 2). Her subsequent marriage to lord Windsor, lieutenant of Ireland, and one of the most distinguished noblemen of the age, warrants the inference that she had been bitterly maligned.—Godwin’s Chaucer, ii. 234.

“ against an obnoxious ministry, was perfectly CHAP.
 “ novel, and indicates a sensible change in the IV.
 “ character of our constitution. In the reign of
 “ Edward the second, parliament had little share
 “ in resisting the government: much more was
 “ effected by the barons, through the risings of their
 “ feudal tenantry. Fifty years of authority better
 “ respected, of law better enforced, had rendered
 “ these more perilous, and of a more violent appear-
 “ ance, than formerly. A surer resource presented
 “ itself in the increased weight of the lower house
 “ in parliament; and this indirect aristocratical
 “ influence gave a surprising impulse to that as-
 “ sembly; and particularly tended to establish,
 “ beyond question, its controul over public
 “ abuses.”¹⁸

And while the energy of the lower house was thus effectively employed with respect to the existing ministry, and supplied so important a precedent in our parliamentary history, its exposures of ecclesiastical disorders are made with the same unsparing hand, exhibiting them as descending, evidently, from the head of the hierarchy to the lowest of its members. The event, however, soon discovered, that the latter class of evils were less within the power of correction possessed by an English house of commons than the former. But the tone of remonstrance adopted on these points, by the representatives of the English people, in 1376, is worthy of notice. We may safely conclude, that they were mistaken in affirming, that the kingdom had recently lost two-thirds of its

¹⁸ Hallam, iii. 85.

CHAP. population and its wealth; but the disasters,
IV. ——— whether of war abroad or of poverty and disease at home, which were believed to have occasioned these alarming privations, are chiefly imputed to the mal-practices of popes and cardinals. In the substance of their petition, as given by Sir Robert Cotton, they state, that the taxes paid to the court of Rome for ecclesiastical dignities, amounted to five times more than those obtained by the king from the whole produce of the realm. “For some
“one bishopric, or other dignity,” the pope is said to receive, “by way of translation and death,
“three, four, or five, several taxes; and while
“for money the brokers of that sinful city (Rome)
“promote many caitiffs, being altogether un-
“learned and unworthy, to a thousand marks’
“living yearly, the learned and worthy can hardly
“obtain twenty marks, whereby learning decay-
“eth;—aliens,” they proceed, “and enemies to
“this land, who never saw, nor care to see, their
“parishioners have those livings; whereby they
“despise God’s service, and convey away the
“treasure of the realm, and are worse than Jews
“or Saracens.” Against these customs, they plead “the law of the church,” which requires that all such preferments should be granted in charity, “without praying or paying.” They also affirm it to be the demand of reason, that establishments which were the fruit of devotion, should be kept subservient to the cause of hospitality; and they fear not to add, that “God has
“given his sheep to the pope to be pastured, and
“not shorn or shaven; and that lay patrons, per-

“ceiving the simony and covetousness of the pope, CHAP.
“do thereby learn to sell their benefices to mere IV.
“brutes, no otherwise than Christ was sold to
“the Jews.” By such means the pontiff is said
to derive a revenue from England alone, exceeding that of any prince in christendom. It is therefore stated, “that the pope’s collector, and
“other strangers, the king’s enemies, and only
“lieger spies for English dignities, and disclosing
“the secrets of the realm, ought to be discharged.”
It is also added, “That the same collector, being
“also receiver of the pope’s pence, keepeth a
“house in London, with clerks and officers there-
“unto belonging, as if it were one of the king’s
“solemn courts, transporting yearly to the pope,
“twenty thousand marks, and most commonly
“more: that cardinals and other aliens, remaining
“at the court of Rome,—whereof one cardinal is a
“dean of York; another of Salisbury; another
“of Lincoln; another archdeacon of Canterbury;
“another archdeacon of Durham; another arch-
“deacon of Suffolk; and another archdeacon of
“York; another prebendary of Thane and Nas-
“singdon; another prebendary of York, in the
“diocese of York,—have divers other, the best
“dignities in England, and have sent over yearly
“unto them, twenty thousand marks, over and
“above that which English brokers lying here
“have: that the pope, to ransom Frenchmen, the
“king’s enemies, who defend Lombardy for him,
“doth always, at his pleasure, levy a subsidy of the
“whole clergy of England; that the pope, for
“mere gain, maketh sundry translations of all the

CHAP. IV. “ bishoprics and other dignities within the realm ;
 “ and that the pope’s collector hath this year
 “ taken to his use the first fruits of all benefices ;
 “ that it would be good, therefore, to renew all
 “ the statutes against provisions from Rome, since
 “ the pope reserveth all the benefices of the world
 “ for his own proper gift, and hath within this
 “ year created twelve new cardinals—so that now
 “ there are thirty, whereas there were wont to be
 “ but twelve in all ; and all the said thirty cardi-
 “ nals, except two or three, are the king’s ene-
 “ mies.” From these facts it is argued, that the
 pontiffs, if unchecked, may, ere long, confer the
 secular dignities, and the estates of the realm, on
 their own creatures, after the manner in which
 they had “ accroached” to themselves the elec-
 tion of heads to “ all houses and corporations of
 “ religion.” To protect the country from prac-
 tices, which threatened to render its present em-
 barrassments perpetual, and by depriving the
 native clergy of nearly every stimulus to improve-
 ment, to reduce it to barbarism, it was required
 that the provisors of the popes should be strenu-
 ously resisted, and that no papal “ collector or
 “ proctor should remain in England, upon pain of
 “ life and limb ; and that no Englishman, on the
 “ like pain, should become such collector or proc-
 “ tor, or remain at the court of Rome.”¹⁹

Such were the proceedings of an assembly on
 which the admiration of the people conferred
 the name of the good parliament. The only per-
 plexing circumstance respecting it is, that its

¹⁹ Cotton’s Abridgment, 128. Fox. Acts and Monuments, i. 561.

measures should have involved so much hostility with regard to the duke of Lancaster. Nor is it easy to suppose, that men so zealous in the cause of ecclesiastical reformation, would have been induced to sacrifice so efficient a partisan, had they not been led to anticipate the most active succour from their new allies, who were known to be his opponents. If such, however, was their expectation, they were painfully deceived; and the duke's adherence to their object, notwithstanding the wound thus received from the hand of its friends, may be regarded as no mean evidence of his political sincerity.

We have noticed, that John of Gaunt em-^{1376.}barked for England early in July. Before his landing, the parliament, which had excluded him from a place in the government, and among its last acts had withdrawn his power as ambassador, was dissolved.²⁰ The prince of Wales, also, the ornament of chivalry, had breathed his last on a bed of sickness. The king, it appears, was far from being satisfied with the committee which had been recently appointed to act as his advisers; and declaring the duke of Lancaster—now his eldest son—his principal associate in the government, the parties who had been prosecuted by the late house of commons were presently recalled. In the subsequent punishment, also, of Peter de la Mare, of the earl of March, and of the bishop of Winchester, who were all active members of the good parliament, we learn the sentiments of the court as to the authors of

²⁰ Rymer, vii. 50 Edw. III. June 12.

CHAP. the obnoxious measures which had obtained the
IV. ——— sanction of that assembly.

About six months intervened between the dissolution of that parliament, and the meeting of another, more devoted to the politics or the power of John of Gaunt. During this interval, some murmurings arose among the people, in consequence of the imprisonment of de la Mare; and the bishops, we may conclude, were not less displeased by the sentence of confiscation which had been passed on the episcopal temporalities of their brother of Winchester. It is observable, that at this moment the doctrine of Wycliffe is first adverted to by the English clergy, as calling for official interference. It was no secret, that to attack the rector of Lutterworth, was an indirect method of assailing his patron, who now presided in the councils of the sovereign. Courtney, one of the most imperious churchmen of the age, had been recently elevated to the see of London, and had fully committed himself against the duke of Lancaster, by his conduct in the parliament of the preceding year. The zeal of this prelate was now employed to rouse and concentrate the indignation of his order against the opinions and conduct of Wycliffe. In the next convocation,—which took place on the third of February, a week subsequent to the opening of the new parliament,²¹—we find the reformer cited to appear before his ecclesiastical superiors, to answer on certain charges, having respect to him, as holding and publishing many erroneous and

Wycliffe is
accused of
holding
erroneous
opinions.
1377.

²¹ Parker, *ubi supra*.

heretical doctrines. The nineteenth day of the same month was fixed for hearing his defence; and St. Paul's is described as crowded with the populace. In explanation of this circumstance, it should be noticed, that the minority in the present house of commons, had sought to strengthen their influence by an alliance with the prelates, and with the citizens of London; and had induced many of the latter to believe, that the duke intended an abridgment of their liberties. Of the people assembled in St. Paul's, the immediate dependents of the clergy would probably form no inconsiderable number; the rest, influenced, perhaps, by the malicious rumour adverted to, appear to have been ripe for tumult. There is no reason, however, to suppose, that Wycliffe shared at all in the resentment of the citizens. On the contrary, it is evident, that his opinions were not less acceptable to the inhabitants of London, than to the students of Oxford.²² But such was the crowd on this occasion, that the authority of Lord Percy, the earl marshal, and that of the duke himself, were scarcely sufficient to procure the accused an avenue of approach to the place of his judges. Some disturbance, arising from this difficulty, attracted the notice of Courtney, who was about to conduct the prosecution; and we may presume that his displeasure was not at all diminished, on perceiving the two most powerful subjects of the crown prepared to shield the rector of Lutterworth from

CHAP.
IV.

Feb. 19.

His appear-
ance in St.
Paul's.

²² Walsingham affirms with indignation, that the Londoners were nearly all

Lollards.—Hist. 191. Fuller's Church History, 185. Cont. Murim. 137.

CHAP. the meditated vengeance of his enemies. The
IV. — prelate hastily accosted these noblemen with the language of reproof, proceeding so far as to express his regret that he had not adopted measures to prevent their admission to the court. The duke regarded this haughty intimation as an insult, and warmly replied, that in such matters the authority of the bishop of London would be insufficient to regulate his conduct. Lord Percy felt with his distinguished colleague under this attack, and resented it so far, as to call upon Wycliffe to be seated, observing, that such an indulgence might be necessary, as he would have much to answer. Courtney loudly opposed the advice of the earl marshal, adding, that such conduct in the person accused, must be interpreted as a contempt of the court. The duke, however, applauded the suggestion of his friend ; and could we credit the hearsay reports of this scene, we should regard him as descending to the use of language alike ungentlemanly and impolitic. He may have charged the bishop with an assumption of importance, in consequence of family connexion ; but it is doubtful, whether it would be done in the style of abuse which has been imputed to him. And we may conclude, that the prudence of John of Gaunt, though no remarkable feature in his character, would be sufficient to prevent his choosing such a moment for declaring his determination to humble the pride, not only of his present antagonist, but of the order of prelacy. We may believe, however, that some angry discussion arose, that, becoming

connected with the already excited feeling of the multitude assembled, a tumult ensued, and that the parties being compelled to separate in disorder, the prosecution was for the present suspended. CHAP.
IV.

Wycliffe, who had continued the silent spectator of this stormy scene, retired with his friends; but the political animosities to which the commotion may be attributed, were not instantly allayed. The violence discovered in the cathedral was extended to the city. The palace of the Savoy, the most magnificent in the kingdom, was assailed by a band of rioters, and the arms of the duke, its owner, reversed as those of a traitor. The property of Lord Percy suffered less; but a clergyman, mistaken for the earl marshal, was slaughtered by the mob. In these proceedings, the mayor and aldermen appear to have been in some degree implicated. They are said to have been removed by the influence of the duke, that their places might be supplied by persons who were deemed more worthy of confidence.²³

²³ That the first appearance of Wycliffe before the prelates was in 1377, and not in the opening of the year following, as supposed by Mr. Lewis, is certain. The assault on the Savoy palace was, undoubtedly, in immediate connexion with the duke's appearance at St. Paul's along with the reformer, and that event is invariably attributed to the year 1377, and not to 1378. In the former year also, Percy was, as described above, earl marshal; but at the commencement of the latter, he had resigned that office, and had

succeeded to the earlship of Northumberland. In addition to which, there is mention in the account of this transaction, of the days of the week, and these agree with the earlier and not with the later date. The papal bulls, indeed, bear the date of June, 1377, and this circumstance has been allowed to confound the meeting at St. Paul's, which took place some days before these letters were written, with that which they produced about six months afterwards. — Wals. 191, 201 — 204. Spelman, ii. 625.

CHAP. The interval between February and October,
IV.

Accession of
Richard the
second.
June 21.

in 1377, Wycliffe appears to have devoted to the claims of his rectory, and to the duties of his professorship. But that period was one of considerable change in the government of the nation. On the morning of the twenty-first of June, Edward the third expired; and on the afternoon of the following day, Richard, the son of the Black Prince, a youth who had not attained the twelfth year of his age, made his public entry into London. His appearance was in the midst of gorgeous pageantry, which, as the act of the citizens, was more honourable to their feelings in relation to the present, than to their former monarch. The reign of the late king had been unusually extended, and was such as ought to have been reviewed with interest and gratitude. But Edward's latter days were embittered from many sources, and his breath had scarcely departed, when he appears to be wholly forgotten by his subjects. Three weeks were employed in preparing for the coronation of Richard the second, — a splendid ceremony, of which some minute accounts have been preserved.²⁴

July 16.

His first
parliament.
Oct. 13.

About three months later, the new monarch assembled his first parliament. It was a scene of considerable excitement, and was to be followed by more boisterous events. As it included nearly the whole of the members composing the good parliament, it is presumed that the influence of the duke of Lancaster was rapidly declining. But affairs may have taken much of their present

²⁴ Wals. 193—198.

course from his disgust, as readily as from his weakness. By the commons, it was required that a council of twelve peers should be appointed to confer with them, on the business before their house; and that “my lord of Spain”—a title frequently given to John of Gaunt—should be of that number, and act as president. The king sanctioned the proposal: but the duke rose, adverted to the rumours which had been circulated touching his loyalty, and attributing them to certain members of the commons, he remarked that the lower house could have no claim on him for advice. While sensible to his demerit, he could not forget that he was the son of a king, and one of the first subjects of the crown, nor would he agree to connect himself again with the affairs of the nation, until the imputation cast upon him should be wholly removed. His ancestors, of either side, had never numbered a traitor among them, nor was he disposed to be the first to bring a stain upon their memory. But while he felt himself thus strongly bound to sentiments of loyalty, and while it was known that he had more to lose by treason, than any second person in the realm, he challenged his accusers to come forth, pledging himself to meet even the poorest knight in single combat, or in any other form, subject to the sanction of his peers. We may conceive of the ferment created by this appeal. The lords and prelates instantly rose, surrounded the person of the duke, and repeated their assurances, that no living man would credit the calumny referred to. The

CHAP.
IV.

commons appealed to their conduct in inviting the offended party to become their principal adviser, as their best defence; and Lancaster at length consented to bury the past, on condition of obtaining a severe enactment against the authors of any such calumny in the future.²⁵

But the name of our reformer is not less involved in the proceedings of this parliament, than that of his patron. Under a minor prince, the advocates of the prerogative must have felt obliged to regard its extension as hopeless, and its preservation from injury as a work of no ordinary difficulty.²⁶ It is obvious also, that the progress of civil liberty, so materially dependent on the existence of deliberative assemblies, representing the persons and property of a state, has never failed to prove a formidable barrier to the despotism of the church. The character of the first parliament, summoned in the name of Richard of Bourdeaux, and the circumstances under which it was convened, were accordingly such as to lead us to anticipate the repetition of former complaints, with respect to the encroachments of the pontiffs. As a remedy against the evils which had hitherto resisted every influence opposed to them, it was urged that the procuring of a benefice by papal provision, should be punished with outlaw, and that the same penalty should be

²⁵ Rot. Parl. iii.

²⁶ The Archbishop of Canterbury appears to have been fully alive to this danger, and hence in his speech, or rather sermon, at the opening of the first parliament, he was careful to in-

culcate that the monarchy of England was not a matter of election but inheritance. Still, in the ceremony of the coronation, a prominence had been given to the forms of a popular election.—Wals. 193.

CHAP.
IV.

incurred by the man who should farm any of the livings in the English church that had been conferred upon foreigners. It was also urged, that the pope should be prevented making “reservations to dignities elective, the same being done against his treaty taken with Edward the third; that all aliens, as well religious as others, do, by candlemas next, avoid the realm; and that during the war, all their lands and goods should be applied thereto.”²⁷ We have seen, that the war adverted to, had long taken a disastrous course. The burdens which it had entailed on the nation were unprecedented, and had created serious complaints. From a document still existing, we learn that it had become a matter of grave discussion, in the present parliament, whether it would not be lawful in a kingdom, in case of necessity, and as the means of defending itself, to detain its treasure, that it might not be conveyed to foreign nations, though the pope himself should demand the same, under pain of his censures, and by virtue of obedience said to be due to him.

Appeal of
the parlia-
ment to the
judgment of
Wycliffe.

The bearings of this question were known to be extensive, and it is said to have been referred to the judgment of Wycliffe in the name of the king. In his reply to this inquiry, the reformer professes to attach but little importance to the opinions of the learned, to the decisions of the canon or of the civil law, or even to the law of England itself—deeming it sufficient to show the affirmative “of this doubt,” from an exclusive

His reply.

²⁷ Cotton's Abridgment, 160—162.

CHAP. appeal to "the principles of the law of Christ."

IV.

— His first reasonings are designed to prove, that the power of self-preservation, which is so variously, but so certainly, conferred on inanimate bodies, on the brute creation, and on the individuals of the human species, is also conferred on the English nation—a community which ought to be "one body, the clergy and the commonalty" "being alike members thereof." It is thence concluded, "that as there is no power given of God, "to any creature, for any end, which may not "be lawfully used to that end, it follows, that "our kingdom may justly detain its treasure for "the defence of itself, in every case where necessity shall appear to require it." In farther attempting the solution of this query, he describes every contribution made to the papacy, as being strictly an alms; and alms, it is contended, are properly bestowed on the recipient, only as he is found to be really necessitous,—and can be justly expected from the donor, only as his affluence may be in the same degree certain. The wealth, however, of the papal court was known to be far beyond its legitimate wants, while the embarrassments of England were producing the loudest murmurs. It was by such steps that the reformer endeavoured to conduct his countrymen to the affirmative of this question. To him it appeared, not only as opposed to the doctrine relating to that temporal power which the popes had frequently asserted, but as connecting itself, very intimately, with much that had been claimed by them as a part of their spiritual jurisdiction. It

is thus the document concludes : “ Christ, the
“ head of the church, whose example should be
“ followed by all christian priests, lived upon the
“ alms of devout women. He hungered, thirsted,
“ was a stranger, and suffered in many ways,
“ not only in his members, but in himself. As
“ the apostle testifies, he was made poor for your
“ sakes, that ye, through his poverty, might be
“ enriched. Accordingly, when the church was
“ first endowed, whoever among the clergy were
“ then holders of any temporal possessions, held
“ the same in the form of a perpetual alms. This
“ is evident from histories, and from other writ-
“ ings. Hence, St. Bernard, in his second book
“ to the pope Eugenius, declares that no secular
“ dominion could be challenged by him on the
“ ground of his office, as the vicar of St. Peter,
“ and writes thus ; ‘ It may indeed be claimed by
“ you, in virtue of some other plea, but assuredly
“ by no right or title derived from the apostles. For
“ how could an apostle give unto you that which
“ he did not himself possess ? That care over the
“ church which he really had, he gave you ;
“ but when did he give you any worldly rule or
“ lordship ? Observe what he saith, ‘ Not bearing
“ rule as lords over God’s heritage, but yielding
“ yourselves as examples to the flock.’ And that
“ ye may not think these words spoken in a show
“ of humility, and not in truth, mark the words of
“ our Lord himself, in the gospel : ‘ The kings of
“ the nations have lordships over them, but it shall
“ not be so with you.’ Here lordly dominion is
“ plainly forbidden to the apostles ; and wilt thou

CHAP. IV. “ venture to usurp the same? If a lord, thine
 “ apostleship is lost, if an apostle, thy lordship is
 “ no more, for certainly the one or the other must
 “ be relinquished. If both are sought, both shall
 “ be lost. Or shouldst thou succeed, then judge
 “ thyself to be of that number, respecting whom
 “ God so greatly complains, saying, ‘ They have
 “ reigned, but not through me; they have become
 “ princes, but I have not known them.’ And if
 “ men will keep that which is forbidden, let us
 “ hear what is said, — ‘ He who is the greatest
 “ among you shall be made as the least, and he
 “ who is the highest shall be your minister;’ and
 “ to illustrate this saying, he set a child in the
 “ midst of his disciples. This then is the true
 “ form and institution of the apostolic calling—
 “ lordship and rule are forbidden, ministration and
 “ service are commanded.’ From these words of
 “ a blessed man whom the whole church hath
 “ agreed to honour, it appears, that the pope has
 “ no right to possess himself of the goods of the
 “ church, as though he were lord of them, but
 “ that he is to be, with respect to them, as a mi-
 “ nister or servant, and the proctor for the poor.
 “ And would to God that the same proud and
 “ eager desire of authority, and lordship, which is
 “ now discovered by this seat of power, were
 “ aught else than a declension, preparing the
 “ pathway of antichrist. From the gospel, evi-
 “ dent it is, that the children of Christ’s kingdom
 “ were not produced by such means, but were
 “ the fruit of his poverty, his humility, and his
 “ suffering of injury. The same blessed man,

“ Bernard, and as far as I remember, in his third CHAP.
 “ book to Eugenius, writeth thus, ‘ I fear not any IV.
 “ greater evil befalling thee, than this eager thirst-
 “ ing for dominion.’ ”²⁸

²⁸ MS. Job. Seldeni B. 10. Fox. Acts and Monuments, i. 584. From the manner in which this document is printed in Fox, it is difficult to determine where the reformer concludes,

and the martyrologist begins. From examining the MS. I find the paper to be more extended and important than it had appeared to be.

CHAP.
V.

CHAPTER V.

THE DOCTRINES OF WYCLIFFE AS KNOWN BEFORE THE DECEASE OF EDWARD. — OPINIONS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM BY THE PONTIFF. — LETTERS FROM THE POPE TO THE KING, THE PRIMATE, THE BISHOP OF LONDON, AND THE UNIVERSITY, REQUIRING THE IMMEDIATE SUPPRESSION OF THE REFORMER'S TENETS. — DISCUSSION ELICITED AT OXFORD BY THE PAPAL MANDATE. — WYCLIFFE'S APPEARANCE BEFORE THE PAPAL DELEGATES AT LAMBETH. — CONTENTS OF THE PAPER SAID TO HAVE BEEN DELIVERED TO THEM. — THE DOCUMENT A FAITHFUL EXHIBITION OF HIS SENTIMENTS RESPECTING THE LIMITS OF THE PAPAL AUTHORITY. — THE POWER OF THE CROWN OVER THE REVENUES OF THE CLERGY. — THE CLAIMS OF THE HIERARCHY, — AND THE PRIESTLY FUNCTION OF BINDING AND LOOSING. — HE IS ASSAILED BY AN ANONYMOUS DIVINE. — HIS INDIGNANT REPLY.

CHAP.
V.

HAVING attempted the prosecution of Wycliffe, the English clergy would feel themselves urged by new motives in opposing his efforts as a reformer — the repulse experienced from the power of Lancaster only serving to sharpen their resentment. What their unaided strength had failed to accomplish, might be anticipated from the more formidable influence of the papacy, and the assistance of the pontiff, in such a cause, it would be easy to obtain. We are not, indeed, informed of the charges which were to have been preferred against the rector of Lutterworth, before the convocation at St. Paul's. But some weeks later, we find the pope in possession of several statements of doctrine, said to be that of Dr. Wycliffe; and as these statements were received from England, it

is scarcely doubtful, that they were received from the persons whose authority, in the instance noticed, had proved too feeble to check the growing disaffection. CHAP.
V.
—

Seventeen years had now intervened since the rise of Wycliffe's dispute with the mendicants; ten years also had passed since his name became known to the papal court by his appeal respecting the wardenship of Canterbury hall; and nearly the same period had elapsed since his spirited defence of the English parliament, in refusing the census granted by king John. We may also conclude, that his recent intercourse with the papal commissioners at Bruges, had contributed to render the dangerous singularities of his character and opinions more known at the papal residence. The discussions involved in that embassy would probably elicit some of his obnoxious tenets, and sometimes provoke the characteristic severity of his language, when adverting to the defects and the vices of the clergy. The due reporting of such matters to the pontiff, would be regarded by his envoys as an important part of their official obligations; but his holiness may have deemed it impolitic to have employed the testimony of his own delegates, in aid of measures opposed to the doctrine of Wycliffe, especially while it was certain, that the publishing of opinions injurious to the credit of the hierarchy, must, ere long, come before him in a less questionable shape, and from sources apparently less partial.

Wycliffe's
doctrine
well known
at this pe-
riod.
1360—1377.

The articles supplied by the pope, as containing the heretical doctrine imputed to Wycliffe, appear

Opinions
attributed
to him by
the pontiff.

CHAP. to have been selected, partly from his writings,
 IV. — and in part from his divinity lectures, and from private conversations. They consist of statements opposed to the doctrine of the pope's temporal power, and to the worldly possessions of the hierarchy; the former being regarded as a gross usurpation, the latter as the main source of the corruptions which had so long dishonoured the christian church. In the first five articles of this series, there is considerable obscurity. They appear, indeed, to be made up of loose and isolated expressions, caught by enemies from the lips of the reformer, and should not be regarded as presenting any fair view of his doctrine. In these, however, he is made to affirm, that it is not in the power of the human race, since the advent of Christ, to confer a political supremacy on St. Peter, and his descendants, for ever:—that to bestow on men such a civil dominion, is even beyond the power of God:—that charters of human origin cannot secure an eternal inheritance:—that the justified are not only entitled to all the good things of God, but actually enjoy them:—and that men act only as ministers of the divine will, in conferring dominion, whether in conferring a temporal dominion upon their natural offspring, or an eternal dominion upon their offspring, by imitation, in the school of Christ.

We shall presently notice Wycliffe's explanation of these articles. It will be sufficient here to remark, that the accusations which they contain, place the reformer before us as a conspicuous opponent of the doctrine which modestly declared

the successors of St. Peter to be as far superior to the kings of the earth, as the soul is more honourable than the body, and eternity more momentous than time. On the ground of this preposterous theory, the "Servant of the servants of God" had long affected to consider every civil as well as every religious immunity of the nations, as enjoyed more on the ground of sufferance from him, than in virtue of any right inherent in themselves. Of the remaining articles, four relate to the design of ecclesiastical property. In these it is stated as an acknowledged truth, that all such property is possessed conditionally, or for certain specified purposes; and on this ground it is affirmed to be the imperious obligation of sovereigns, to confiscate the temporalities of ecclesiastics who habitually abuse them.

But in this catalogue of heresies, there are nine propositions which relate to the doctrine of the age respecting spiritual censures. These, though scarcely noticed by historians, and equally neglected by Wycliffe's biographers, evidently belong to the most important peculiarities of his creed, and afford unquestionable proof of the vigour and intrepidity of his mind. In this class of articles, it is affirmed that no ecclesiastic, however elevated, can impart either good or evil by his benedictions, or by his censures, except as these are in agreement with the law of Christ. The consequence deduced is, that the adversaries of that law have nothing to hope from priestly absolution, and that men of an opposite character have as little to fear from the priestly anathema. It is farther stated, that the Saviour has not

CHAP. V. ——— afforded any example of extorting temporal things by spiritual penalties, but rather the reverse—and hence, that no such practice should be admitted among his followers. And while every priest, truly ordained, is declared competent to the ministry of every sacrament, it is in conclusion asserted, that the highest dignitaries, not excepting the pontiff himself, may be lawfully corrected by their inferiors, and even by the laity.

From this passing notice of the matters which now formed the accredited doctrines of our reformer, the reader will anticipate that a determined effort would be made to prevent their diffusion. The blow which was thus pointed against the overgrown possessions of churchmen, and which threatened, at the same moment, to dissolve the power of that “unlawful magic” which they had long exercised over the conscience of their victims, in relation to futurity, was perceived by many of the English clergy, and would not be less obvious to the sagacity of the papal court.

Papal letters to the prelates, the king, and the university. June 11, 1377.

On the same day, three bulls were despatched, addressed to the archbishop of Canterbury, and to the bishop of London; and these were accompanied by a fourth, in which the pontiff solicits the aid of the king; and by another, in which he demands the prompt obedience of the university of Oxford.¹ In all these letters, the pope extols the character of the English; and in those sent to the prelates, he applauds the Anglican church, as having frequently produced among her clergy, men enriched with a pure knowledge of the

¹ These letters are all inserted in the Appendix, No. XI.—XV.

scriptures, grave, devout, and the defenders of CHAP.
V.
orthodoxy. But it is regretted that the zeal of ——— the fathers has not been imbibed by the children. The report of heresy could now be distinctly heard at Rome, while the evil remained unopposed in England. Information had been received from persons truly worthy of credit, from which it appeared that John Wycliffe, rector of Lutterworth, in the diocese of Lincoln, and professor of divinity, with a fearlessness the offspring of a detestable insanity, had ventured to dogmatise and preach in favour of opinions wholly subversive of the church. For this cause, the parties addressed are required to seize the person of the offender, in the name of the pope; to commit him to prison; to obtain complete information as to his tenets; and transmitting such information to Rome, by a trusty messenger, they were to retain the heresiarch as their prisoner, until farther instruction should be received concerning him. Should they fail in attempting his apprehension, they are required, in the second pontifical letter, to affix a citation in such places as may bring it to the knowledge of the said Wycliffe, demanding his personal appearance before the pontiff, within three months from the date of such document. The prelates are farther instructed to employ their vigilance, that the king, the prince of Aquitain and Wales, and others of the nobility, and the counsellors of the sovereign, may not be defiled with the errors adverted to; but that they may rather learn to regard such opinions as hostile to all government,

CHAP. and be induced to afford their speedy and effec-
V.
— tive aid to destroy them.

The bull addressed to the king, differs from those conveyed to the bishops only as informing the monarch of the instructions which had been sent to those dignitaries, and as requiring him, from his known reverence for the apostolic see, to grant the said prelates his countenance and protection in discharging the duties imposed on them. In the official document borne by a special messenger to the university, the signs of religious declension in England are again deplored; and the doctrine of Wycliffe is again described as opposed to the existence of the church, and to all the forms of civil authority. That learned body is in consequence strictly enjoined, in virtue of that sacred obedience which is due to the apostolic letters, and on pain of losing all graces, indulgencies, and privileges granted to their university by the holy see, to prevent the teaching of any such conclusions as were imputed to John Wycliffe, and to cause the person of that offender to be committed to the custody of the archbishop of Canterbury, or to that of the bishop of London. Should others, defiled by his errors, attempt a resistance of this mandate, it is required, that with respect to them, the same summary methods should be adopted. On a comparison of these epistles, the reader will perceive that they are little more than transcripts of each other, excepting a brief reference to the particular persons addressed, and the special service required of them.

It should be observed that in the formidable

process which we now see directed against the rector of Lutterworth, there is no mention of any confronting of the accuser and the accused. On the contrary, the prelates are commanded to obtain their information respecting the heresies specified by secret means; and having committed the reformer to prison, and extorted from him whatever might be obtained to determine his principles, the result of these concealed investigations was to be privately transmitted to the papal court. The agents of that court had been too long familiarized to such modes of procedure, to be capable of regarding them as involving any infringement of the rights of human nature. But Wycliffe often complained of these inquisitorial customs, which, by sheltering the informer from the responsibilities of his conduct, placed the means of revenge but too much at the bidding of the unprincipled and malevolent.

It should also be remarked, that the bishop, the monarch, and the university, are alike admonished, that the errors taught by Wycliffe were of the same class with those promulgated some fifty years previously by John de Ganduno and Marcillus,—men, whose memory is declared to be infamous, in consequence of censures pronounced upon them by pope John the twenty-second. The first of these persons was a distinguished lawyer; and, as his name imports, a native of Ghent. Marcillus was of the same profession, and is described as Marcillus of Padua. With respect to their tenets, since they are thus identified with those of Wycliffe, it will be proper to

CHAP. observe, that they appear to have been elicited
 V.
 — by the controversy which had been so long perpetuated between the pontiffs and the German emperors, to determine the limits of the monarchical as distinguished from the pontifical power. Sheltered by his imperial majesty from the violence of the court of Rome, these learned men were not satisfied with barely questioning the doctrine of the pope's temporal power, but affirmed it to be the right of sovereigns to preside over every temporality of the church, and even to regulate the details of spiritual discipline, as far as that might be deemed necessary to the independence of their territories, or to the rights of national churches.² Marcillus, indeed, appears to have viewed the pastors of the primitive church as possessing the same office and authority; and to have declared, accordingly, that every step of that distinction which had been conceded to the pope was an innovation and a grievance. We have no ground, however, for supposing, that the English reformer was really conversant with the

² Mosheim (iii. 348, 349,) notices Marcillus and Ganduno, with others, who assisted them in waging the war of the emperor against the pope. But among the men whom he describes as highly and deservedly esteemed on account of their eminent parts and learning, the most conspicuous place is assigned to our countryman, Occam. He is said to have "surpassed them all in the keenness and spirit of his satire; and hence his Dialogues, together with his other productions, which were perused with avidity, and transmitted down to succeeding generations, gave, as it were, a

"mortal blow to the ambition and majesty of the Roman pontiffs." Marcillus published, among other pieces, a work entitled "Defensor pro Ludovico Bavaro adversus usurpatam Romani Pontificis Jurisdictionem." This memorable work he produced while professor at Vienna. It was published at Frankfort, in 1592, by Franc Gomarus, 8vo. But nearly half a century earlier, one of his most obnoxious pieces was translated and published in English, under the title, "The Defence of Peace," &c. fol.—Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Biography, i. 36.

productions of these writers. The works of the CHAP.
V.
earlier fathers, and the more recent literature of ———
his own country, appear to have been the chief
source, next to the scriptures, of the doctrines
which he taught. His studies, relating to the civil
and canon law, must have rendered him in some
degree familiar with the disputes, which through
so long an interval, had divided the empire and
the church. That his opinions were opposed to
the secular pretensions of the pope, and of his
dependents, is certain; and whether they were
derived from Marcillus, or from any other quarter,
it required no little hardihood to publish them
through a powerful kingdom, where, if we may
credit the repeated declarations of the pontiff,
they had been hitherto unknown.

The documents which thus appealed both to
the civil and religious authorities, claiming their
activity to eradicate these seeds of spiritual insub-
ordination, bear the date of June 1377; but they
either failed to reach this country at the usual
period, or were reserved in secrecy, until a favour-
able moment should occur for producing them.
It is not improbable, that the confidence placed in
the learning and integrity of the reformer, by the
commons house of parliament, in the following
October, had created new alarm. Wycliffe's de-
cisive answer to the question proposed by that
body, must have destroyed all hope of putting
him to silence, except by the most coercive mea-
sures. In the ensuing month the papal instruc-
tions were no longer a secret. But before the
arrival of that period, Edward the third had

CHAP. V. expired, and the epistle which solicited his aid was
 ——— probably unknown to his grandson and successor,
 Richard the second.

Discussion
 created at
 Oxford by
 the papal
 mandate.

In Oxford, the arrival of the papal envoy, with the demands of his master, created serious discussions. On the question, whether the bull of the pontiff should be received or rejected, the former resolution was at length adopted. But it was done with no little reluctance;³ and, in their subsequent conduct, nothing appears farther from the purpose of the heads of the university, than to become the instruments of committing the person of Wycliffe to the mercy of his enemies. Their caution, in the present instance, may have arisen in part from the jealousy with which, in those ages, almost every act of papal interference was regarded by such establishments; for the despotism which had so completely invaded the liberties of the church, was variously obtruded into the seats of learning. But the letter of the pontiff had anticipated opposition from the adherents of the reformer; and these, it is evident, were at this moment sufficiently numerous and powerful to produce the delays adverted to, and to prevent the seminary from incurring the odium of at once denouncing its brightest ornament.

The appeal made to the prelates was more successful. Sudbury, now archbishop of Canterbury, wrote to the chancellor of Oxford, reminding him of the papal mandate, and insisting on its being executed in all things diligently and faithfully.

³ Walsingham is quite astounded at the infatuation which could pro-

duce the hesitation alluded to.—Hist. Ann.

He is also required to obtain, by the assistance of CHAP.
V.
— the most orthodox and skilful divines, correct information as to the said heresies, and to convey, with his statement of the opinions certainly propagated by Wycliffe, his own judgment respecting them, delivered under the university seal. It was moreover enjoined upon him, that, as chancellor, he should cite the erroneous teacher, or cause him to be cited, personally to appear before his ecclesiastical superiors, in the church of St. Paul's, London, on the thirtieth court day from the date of the citation.

This letter was written on the eighteenth of December, and early in the ensuing year Wycliffe appeared before a synod, at Lambeth. The duke of Lancaster no longer ruled in the cabinet; but events discovered that the reformer was far from depending even on his aid in the object before him. On the court and the populace his doctrines were daily making a powerful impression. The latter, alarmed for his safety, surrounded the place of meeting, and with many of the citizens forced their way into the chapel, where the parties were convened, proclaiming their attachment to the person and opinions of the rector of Lutterworth. The dismay created by this tumult was augmented, when Sir Lewis Clifford entered the court, and in the name of the queen mother, forbade the bishops proceeding to any definite sentence respecting the doctrine or the conduct of Wycliffe. Thus, by the better zeal of the laity, the plans of ecclesiastics to suppress the tenets of the reformation, were again frustrated. Walsingham, in

Wycliffe's
appearance
at Lambeth.
1378.

CHAP. V. relating this disastrous event, betrays the temper of the wolf when robbed of his prey. The delegates, he observes, “shaken as a reed with the wind, “became soft as oil in their speech, to the open “forfeiture of their own dignity, and the injury “of the whole church. With such fear were “they struck, that you would think them a man “who hears not, or one in whose mouth are no “reproofs.”⁴

Summary of the paper said to have been delivered by him to the papal delegates.

It is the same historian who relates, that at this meeting Wycliffe delivered a paper to the prelates containing a statement of his opinions; and by various modern writers this document has been most unfairly represented. It has been more than insinuated, that certain of its explanations were less the result of ingenuousness than of timidity. Whatever is known of Wycliffe's previous character, is opposed to this conclusion; as is the fact of his growing influence at this time, both with the people and with many of the most considerable persons of the realm. It is also unquestionable, that many opinions were attributed to him which he never either avowed or entertained. It is no matter of surprise, therefore, that certain of his tenets, as explained by himself, should be less extravagant than as put forth by his enemies.

⁴ Spelman, ii. 625. Lewis, 315. A similar interference of the queen mother had occurred a little previously to terminate the dispute between the Londoners and the duke of Lancaster. The persons delegated “to “entreat the citizens to be reconciled “with the duke” were Sir Alfred Lewer, Sir Simon Burley, and this

same Sir Lewis Clifford. And “the “Londoners answered, that they, for “the honour of the princess, would “obey and do with all reverence “what she would require.”—Fox's Acts and Monuments, i. 559. Walsingham, also, relates, that a similar tumult arose during the trial of Ashton the Lollard.—Ann. 1382.

Nor are we sure that the paper which appears in CHAP.
V. Walsingham has wholly escaped mutilation. It is certain that a copy, subsequently published by the author, was somewhat more extended and explicit in several particulars.⁵ But passing over this point, nothing more is required, to place the conduct of the reformer, at this crisis, in a light truly commanding, than that some allowance be made for his lingering partiality to an obsolete method of reasoning derived from the schools, and that the *whole* of his statement be attended to.⁶

It is thus his remarks are introduced: “In the
“first place, I protest publicly, as I have often
“done, that I resolve with my whole heart, and
“by the grace of God, to be a sincere christian;
“and, while life shall last, to profess and to defend
“the law of Christ as far as I have power. If
“through ignorance, or from any other cause, I
“shall fail in this determination, I ask forgiveness
“of God, and, retracting the error, submit with

⁵ Wals. ad Ann. The second paper is in the Appendix, No. XVI. It differs from the first but in the particulars that will be stated in the text.

⁶ A particular emphasis is laid on attending to the *whole* of the reformer's statement, for the following among other reasons. The scholastic philosophy introduced the existing custom of dividing a text of scripture into a multitude of parts. The greater, also, the number of distinct propositions that could be deduced from a passage, the more obvious was the genius of the preacher. We see the influence of this taste on the mind of Wycliffe himself, in one of his latest pieces against the friars, where he accuses that body of holding more than fifty heresies, and

these are made to form so many sections of his work; and even in this instance his moderation appears, when compared with the founder of the Occamists, who charged the pontiff, John the twenty-second, with holding more than seventy propositions, deserving the same designation, (Bul. Hist. Univ. Paris, iv. 7). In such cases a distinction must often have been made, where the difference was not very evident, and some of the separate propositions, if they could be said to possess any meaning, it must frequently have been very little—quite as little, perhaps, as the assertion of our reformer when simply declaring that the papal dominion must be of limited duration.

CHAP. V. “humility to the correction of the church. And
 ——— “to prevent the christian from being scandalized
 “on my account, since I am prosecuted for my
 “faith; and since the notions of children, and of
 “weak persons, concerning what I have taught,
 “are conveyed by others, who are more than
 “children, beyond the seas, even to the court of
 “Rome, I am willing to commit my opinions to
 “writing. These also, I am now ready to defend
 “even unto death; and the same duty I regard as
 “binding upon all christians, but particularly on
 “the bishop of Rome, and on the whole priest-
 “hood of the church. In my conclusions, I have
 “followed the sacred scriptures and the holy
 “doctors, both in their meaning and in their
 “modes of expression; this I am willing to
 “show; but should it be proved that such con-
 “clusions are opposed to the faith, I am prepared
 “very willingly to retract them.”⁷ From this
 preface, equally characterized by firmness and
 discretion, the writer proceeds to notice the tenets
 imputed to him, and which had been denounced
 as false, or as of injurious tendency. In the
 pope’s schedule, these articles are numbered
 with scarcely any reference to their import; as
 noticed in this place, they will be classed ac-
 cording to the matters to which they relate.⁸

⁷ Such confessions are not unfre-
 quent in the reformer’s writings. It
 is thus he concludes a passage, in
 which he has denied the tenets of or-
 thodoxy with respect to priestly ab-
 solution: “If any man would show
 “more plainly this sentence, by the

“law of God, I would meekly assent
 “thereto. And if any man prove this
 “to be false or against the law of God,
 “that I have now said herein, I would
 “meekly revoke it.” — Codd. Ric.
 Jamesii, Bibl. Bod. i.

⁸ See Appendix, No. XVII.

The first article declared it to be above the power of the human race, since the advent of Christ, to confer on St. Peter and his successors, the political government of the world, for ever. On this statement, Wycliffe remarked, that, if understood literally, the phrase “for ever” meaning eternity, it contained a truth too obvious to be disputed, since the divine purpose, which has limited the existence of the present world, has, in consequence, fixed a period to all its political relations. This arrangement is then noticed as being no matter of conjecture, but as forming a leading feature in the economy established with respect to man and this world, through the mediation of Christ. The *perpetuity* thus denied to the political dominion of the pontiffs was not, indeed, the only limitation which the reformer knew to be opposed by the scriptures to that scheme of boundless usurpation; and he may have erred, in presuming so far upon the candour of his readers, as to expect that their judgment of his doctrine on this subject, would be deferred until the several parts of his statement relating to it should be duly considered. This, as will appear in the sequel, was the amount of his offending.⁹

CHAP.
V.
Wycliffe's
sentiments
on the limits
of the papal
authority.

⁹ My vindication of Wycliffe's conduct at this crisis, is founded, chiefly, on two facts :—

1st. We have no evidence that he had hitherto entertained opinions, or employed expressions, concerning the pontiffs, at all different from what we find in the paper now given to his judges. Mr. Lewis, indeed, represents him as having already published the following pieces: Trialogus. Sen-

tence of the Curse Expounded. On Prelates. On Clerks-Possessioners. How Antichrist and his Clerks feren true Priests fro preaching Christ's Gospel. How Satan and his Priests, and his feyned Religions casten by three cursed heresies, &c. And his tract on Servants and Lords. (Life of Wiclif, c. iii. 37—43.) If this representation were correct, then some of the strongest things ever said by

CHAP. V. The second conclusion affirms, that the imparting of such a dominion to any order of men, is

Wycliffe against the papacy, were things said before his present appearance at Lambeth; and the comparison to be made is between the statements contained in these "Conclusions," and passages in which the papal power is denounced as the predicted Antichrist, and as stained with almost every corruption. This representation, however, though adopted by Mr. Lewis, and adopted apparently by every writer on this subject from the age of the reformer to our own, is *altogether erroneous*. The *Triologus* contains a reference (lib. iv. c. 36.) to the memorable council, which was disturbed by an earthquake—an event, which belongs to the year 1382. That work, accordingly, could not have been published until at least four years after these "Conclusions." The "Sentence of the Curse," &c. includes an allusion to the war conducted against the antipope by Spencer, bishop of Norwich, describing it as a war maintained "for the love of two false priests, who are open Antichrists," c. xv. But this affair belongs to the year 1383. In his work on Prelates, the reformer adverts to the same event, observing, that "if pardons should be granted, it should be to make peace, and not to make dissensions and wars," c. xiii. This MS. contains also repeated allusions to the conduct of the prelates in endeavouring to silence the reformer's "poor priests;" and we learn nothing as to the existence of the latter class of men, until some time after the year 1377, c. vi. xvi. xxiii. xxvii. In the MS. on Clerks-Possessioners, the same events are noticed, and especially the frequent persecutions of the reformer's itinerant preachers, "because they live poorly and justly, and go about teaching God's law." c. xvi. The whole of the work, intitled, "How

"Antichrist and his Clerks," &c. is employed in vindicating the prominence given by these poor priests to the office of preaching, and must of course belong to a period subsequent to the commencement of their labours. The piece on "Satan and his Priests," &c. not only refers to the same state of things, but to the opposition excited by the translation of the Scriptures into English; an achievement which was also subsequent to this time. And as to the tract "On Servants and Lords," it was evidently elicited by the insurrection under Wat Tyler, and throughout is meant to vindicate the reformer's doctrine from the charge of favouring a spirit of anarchy. Of all this the reader will have further proof as these works shall come under his notice. I must repeat, therefore, that we have no evidence that there was any one doctrine maintained by Wycliffe up to 1378, at all more hostile to the papal power, or to the reigning superstitions, than were the conclusions then submitted to his judges. This view of things places the conduct of the reformer, at this crisis, in an entirely new light; and while there is not a circumstance to warrant a suspicion of its correctness, I must contend that Wycliffe is fairly vindicated from the long reiterated accusation of having concealed his opinions to escape the terrors of power. Rome was not denounced as Antichrist until Rome became his prosecutor. My own judgment on this point was long the common one; and if I have applauded the courage of our proto-reformer, where others have deemed it necessary to apologise for his frailty, I have done this contrary to my own anticipations, and as the consequence of more correct information.

2. The second fact on which I found

even above the power of God.¹⁰ But this asser-
tion is interpreted after the same manner. It is
evident, that if the natural power of the Deity be
restrained, it must be by some moral considera-
tions; and the impossibility here asserted, is
viewed as founded on the moral claims of the
spouse of Christ, and the faithfulness of God,
with respect to his promises. In Wycliffe's
statement relative to these conclusions, which
was published subsequently to his appearance
before the synod, there is no addition made to
the above explanation; and the propositions
contained in this and in the preceding article,
are evidently treated by him as axioms, from
which he is about to pass to more definite rea-
sonings.

CHAP.
V.

the vindication of Wycliffe's conduct in this instance, is, that while the articles which he may be thought to have softened down are not more than four, the remaining, to which no suspicion of this kind can attach, amount to more than three times that number:—the latter, too, being in their nature such as to require equivocation quite as much as the former, if that art was to be at all resorted to. The only fair inference, therefore, is, that the few points on which the reformer has not expressed himself to the taste of modern readers, are points on which his views were, at this time, different from theirs.—Note to the second edition.

¹⁰ That must be a spiritless teacher who never startled his auditors by a paradox, or roused their attention by a boldness of statement resembling the above proposition. By the schoolmen this rhetorical manœuvre was frequently resorted to, sometimes merely

to display their ingenuity by adroitly escaping from a difficulty, and sometimes for the more laudable purpose of securing attention to the illustration of some important truth. Thus Anselm, the reputed father of this science, gravely declares, in one of his popular discourses, that the will of man is omnipotent; and proceeding to explain his statement, he remarks, that in heaven the will of man will be so disciplined as to desire nothing but what the Omnipotent will be pleased to confer, and that thus it will be itself omnipotent.—Sermon on Rev. chap. vii. It would be easy to cite other specimens of this kind of reasoning, which, in the middle ages, was not thought to betray any thing either of littleness or insincerity. There is not, perhaps, another schoolman, except Bradwardine, who was so little disposed to this sort of trifling as our reformer.

CHAP. V. — The third article is of the same description, stating it as impossible to become entitled to an eternal inheritance, by virtue of charters which are of human origin. In his subsequent answer, however, he observes on this conclusion, that it was a passing remark, which arose in his conversation with a certain divine who magnified such charters so far as to prefer their authority to that of the scriptures. “To which,” he states, “I replied, that it would be much better to attend “to the defence and exposition of the scriptures, “since many such charters were necessarily incapable of execution.” The same casual origin may, with much probability, be ascribed to the preceding articles. They appear very like the crude information which the reformer notices, as supplied against him, “by children and weak “persons.” In his view, however, even these propositions, elementary as they were, possessed a tendency to imprint on worldly men the faith of Christ, and to prevent their being drowned in the sea of a “world which is passing away, with “the lusts thereof.”

As these introductory articles contained no heretical sentiment, it was in Wycliffe's manner to dispose of them by explanations which, while sufficient for that purpose, left his peculiar opinions to be connected with those subsequent propositions which more obviously referred to them.¹¹

¹¹ In the sixth article of the second paper, he refers for his entire doctrine to the statements introduced in connexion with the sixth, the sixteenth, and seventeenth in the previous do-

cument, adding, that the latter observations were inserted, that the preceding reasoning might not appear to be inapplicable “by its remoteness.”

It is in the last article of the series that the re-^{CHAP.}
former enters upon the delicate question of the ^{V.}——
duty of christians with respect to a delinquent
pontiff. The doctrine avowed by him on this sub-
ject, must have been heard with no little displea-
sure by the true adherents of the papacy. From the
fourth century to the present period, it had been
the effort of the popes, or of their flatterers, to place
the accredited representatives of St. Peter above
all human control. Their equals, by whom alone
they might be judged, were not supposed to
exist; and thus the correction of a pontiff, came to
be extensively regarded, as a work which the
Deity was alone competent to perform. Against
this impious tenet, and in defiance of the power
of its advocates, Wycliffe delivers his solemn pro-
test. By Walsingham, he is introduced as stating
that, in certain cases, an ecclesiastic, and even the
bishop of Rome, may be corrected by his inferiors,
and by these, not only from among the clergy,
but from among the laity. He is said to have con-
tended, moreover, that this might be done whenever
the good of the church should require it. Wycliffe
does not disown this doctrine, alarming and offen-
sive as he found it to be. In support of it, he as-
sumes the pope to be a peccable brother, sharing,
in common with other men, in a tendency to what
is sinful; and thence infers his equal subjection to
the laws of brotherly reproof. He accordingly
writes, “ If it be evident, therefore, that the college
“ of cardinals are remiss in performing this ser-
“ vice, for the necessary welfare of the church, it
“ is obvious that others, and it may chance prin-

CHAP. V. “cipally the laity, may reprove and implead him, “ and reduce him to a better life.” After this statement, it is intimated, that the impeachment of a pontiff, is certainly a work not to be rashly undertaken; but it is also remarked, that where ground for such a proceeding really exists, to shrink from the duty, is not only to suppose the pope an offender, but an offender beyond the hope of recovery. With his characteristic firmness and devotion, he concludes, “ God forbid that truth should be condemned by the church of Christ, because it “ sounds unpleasantly in the ear of the guilty, or of “ the ignorant!—for then, the entire faith of the “ scriptures will be exposed to condemnation.”

In judging of Wycliffe’s conduct, at this critical period of his history, common fairness requires, that the reader should connect the explanations attached to the previous articles, which refer to the *duration* of the pontifical power, with these statements, annexed to the proposition which related more immediately to its *character*. If the laity might be justly employed in impleading a pontiff, and bringing even the successor of St. Peter to a better life; the subordinate members of the hierarchy were, of course, regarded as subject to the same kind of discipline. The right of the people, also, to judge as to what is, or is not, for the good of the church, is distinctly assumed as at the foundation of this doctrine. It is nevertheless avowed, committed to writing, and delivered to the English clergy, in their character as the delegates of the papal power!¹²

¹² What is the amount of the charge preferred against Wycliffe on the ground of this article, and the two connected with it? If it mean any

thing, it is that while these articles appear to contain a renunciation of the pope’s temporal power, the explanations, which the reformer has attached

It will be proper, also, to consider the obscure article already noticed as referring to the authority of human charters, in connexion with the sixth, the sixteenth, and the seventeenth in the same series. These are all variously related to the same subject, and present a gradual development of Wycliffe's opinions, concerning the authority pertaining to secular lords with respect to the temporalities of the christian church. In the first of the three articles, more nearly relating to this important question, it is stated, "that if God is, "temporal lords may lawfully, and meritoriously, "take away the goods of fortune from a delinquent "church." Here, also, the reformer's reasonings have called forth censures, which a little reflection in some, and a little integrity in others, would have been sufficient to prevent. It is thus he commences the statement of his doctrine on this point: "If God is, he is almighty; and if so, he "may prescribe to secular lords the exercise of "the authority supposed in the proposition stated, "and then to perform the supposed service, would "be most plainly their duty." Such is *a part* of Wycliffe's answer, to the question relating to the seat of sovereignty with respect to ecclesiastical wealth; and had this been the whole of his

CHAP.
V.

On the
power of the
crown over
the revenues
of the
clergy.

to them, do not contain it. But who can believe that Wycliffe could have felt any difficulty in renouncing a tenet which had been rejected by king, lords, and commons, including a unanimous vote of the prelates, so late as the year 1366? Or can that man be fairly charged with fearing to deny the authority of the pontiffs as extended over the persons and property of the

laity, who, in this same paper, does not fear to deny that authority as extended to the most privileged possessions of the clergy? So intelligent, however, and so candid, is the reasoning brought to this subject, by that "stream of authorities" which a certain anonymous critic would have had me "ingenuous" enough to follow. Note to the second edition.

CHAP. V. reply, it might have warranted the triumph of his
— adversaries. And frequently, and most dishonestly, has it been given, as though it really did include all that he dared to avow, at the present moment, on this point. On a comparison of the explanation attached to this article in the paper submitted to the delegates, with that given by the reformer in his second answer, it will appear that the “remoteness” of his reasoning in this particular, which has so greatly offended modern discernment, was not a secret to its author; and that nothing was farther from his intention, than to quit the theme, which he was thus distantly approaching, without committing himself to a more decisive contact with its difficulties. At no period, did he sanction an invasion of the property of the clergy, “to the injury of the church; or except in forms “and cases limited by law.” The change contemplated, was not to be effected by the misguided passions of the multitude, nor by the rapacity of irreligious statesmen, but, was one to be regulated by a devout reference to the law of Christ. To his remarks, on the sixteenth and seventeenth articles, in the schedule received from the pontiff, he refers, as expressing his genuine doctrine. In those articles, he is accused of teaching, that all church endowments are left conditionally; that if the clergy fail to apply their wealth to the end which it was designed to promote, it devolves on the magistrate to enforce such an application of it; and that in every such case, the civil power is not only authorized to do this, but if needful to the reformation of the order, to deprive churchmen

of their possessions entirely ; and this, though the most alarming censures of the church should be employed to prevent it. Such is the doctrine which Wycliffe is described as holding, with respect to the enormous wealth of the ecclesiastical orders ; and in his conclusions, instead of being denied, evaded, or softened down, it is fully and distinctly acknowledged as a part of his creed. With the prelacy of England as his judges, and the papal power as their ally, he fears not to add, that if there be any difference between the obligations of the magistrate, when referring to ecclesiastical, as distinguished from civil endowments, those which bind upon him an inspection of the former, are the most sacred, as the issues depending on his fidelity are the most momentous.

It was thus that the reformer denied to the Roman bishops the sovereignty which they had so long claimed with respect to the property of every religious establishment in Europe. A censure, also, was thus pronounced on the conduct of those national hierarchies, who, to evade the claims of the monarch on their ample resources, had often descended to plead for this supremacy of the pontiffs, as extending to their possessions, no less than to their faith. In the theory of Wycliffe, the last appeal is made to the crown, and not to the mitre ; and the parties acting upon it, if assailed by the thunders of the church, are viewed as possessing a sufficient protection from such weapons in the certain justice of their cause. The reader will perceive, that in the supposed case, the balance of integrity and discernment, in judging as to the

CHAP. V. nature of religion, and as to the best means of promoting it, is presumed to be in favour of the laity, as opposed to the clergy. It was, doubtless, by such steps, that the mind of the English people was prepared to adopt two maxims, the reception of which was strictly necessary to the emancipation of their country:—first, that a reduction of ecclesiastical property may be essential to a permanent ecclesiastical reform; and, secondly, that to effect this, the power of the magistrate was fully competent.

In two of the remaining articles, the reformer is made to state, that every justified person is not only entitled to all the good things of God, but actually enjoys them; and that a man may confer dominion, whether temporal, upon his natural offspring, or eternal, upon his spiritual offspring in the school of Christ, only as a minister or instrument of the divine will. These propositions are admitted to be true, and they relate to some theological speculations which Wycliffe is said to have derived from the writings of Augustine; but to which, it is certain, the reformer never attached any serious importance. In their present form, it is difficult to attach any definite meaning to them; nor does the passing notice afterwards bestowed upon them, render them greatly more intelligible.¹³

¹³ His piece in reply to the question proposed to him by the first parliament of Richard the second, shows, that he had then learnt to believe, that where the morals of a priesthood had become seriously corrupt, their office was the forfeiture incurred. He knew not, in the case of the clergy, how to distinguish between the man and his

office; but that he could do so with respect to civil rulers is unquestionable, from his known esteem for John of Gaunt, at a time when his connexion with Catherine Swinford was such as to involve him in the guilt of mortal sin.—Godwin's *Life of Chaucer*, vol. ii. 229, 231. The following are noticed by Wycliffe, in one of his treatises, as

It will at the same time be remembered, that the CHAP. V. opponents of the reformer have accused him of holding a doctrine, which they designate, “dominion founded in grace;” and to excite the alarm of the opulent and the powerful, the tenet intended by this phrase was eagerly promulgated as not less opposed to civil, than to ecclesiastical authority. This doctrine will claim our attention in another place. It will be sufficient here to remark, that when the process now instituted against the rector of Lutterworth commenced, he was known as the chaplain of Edward the third; as having derived his ecclesiastical preferments from the favour of his sovereign; and as a man recently appointed by the English parliament to advocate the claims of the crown before the papal commissioners at Bruges; also, as the intimate friend of the duke of Lancaster, the most opulent subject in the state. That the man thus connected, was the advocate of doctrines unfriendly to the authority of the civil power, will hardly be supposed, excepting where prejudice has placed the mind beyond the reach of conviction. It is true, that many of his later productions, while abounding with exhortations to obedience, discover the warmest attachment to every principle of equity and kindness, inculcating such virtues, as the peculiar obligation of rulers, and of the affluent. These we shall again advert to, but must here state, that his boldest censures of magisterial

the signs of freedom from the guilt of mortal sin. “When a man will gladly
“and willingly hear the word of God:
“when he knoweth himself prepared

“to do good works; when he is willing
“to flee sin; when a man can be sorry
“for his sins.”—MS. Cotton. Titus, D.
xix. 122. See chapter on his opinions.

CHAP. V. negligence or crime, are commonly guarded against that abuse which the zeal of his opponents has been so forward to connect with them.¹⁴

Of the hierarchy.

The fifteenth conclusion we have noticed, as stating that a priest is no less competent to the ministry of every sacrament than a bishop. For this doctrine Wycliffe distinctly pleads; observing in its defence, that “the power of priesthood is a “matter which may not exist in a degree either “more or less.” That there may be just ground for restraining or extending the official services of the inferior clergy, according to existing practices, is admitted; but he concludes by describing the distinction between such clerks and their prelates, as consisting simply in a difference of *jurisdiction*, and not in a difference of *character*.

Wycliffe's doctrine concerning the spiritual power of the clergy.

The articles in this series, still demanding our attention, are eight in number. These, however, all relate to the nature of spiritual censures, or to the principles which should regulate their application. With respect to their application, it is delivered as the doctrine of the reformer, that they should never be employed as the instrument of revenge, inasmuch as the passion itself is forbidden, and because the known justice of God should be sufficient to limit the use of the powers which he has intrusted to man, to such matters

¹⁴ It appears that the ministerial, or, more properly, subordinate character asserted of all human decisions, in the fourteenth article, was connected, in the mind of Wycliffe, with the important maxim of appeal to the word of God, as the only absolute authority. In its isolated form, the proposition may appear trivial or ob-

scure; but it is certain, that it was not considered, either by the reformer or by his judges, as standing alone. See the chapter on the reformer's opinions, where it will appear, that the doctrine of “dominion founded in grace,” instead of being a “favourite” tenet, is one to which scarcely any attention is given in the course of his writings.

only as are known to be opposed to that justice. CHAP.
Their employment, especially, as a punishment ^{V.}
for withholding temporal offerings from the clergy,
is not only declared to be without the sanction of
scripture precedent, but is described as in oppo-
sition to it. In the writer's more acknowledged
statement of this doctrine, its truth is illustrated
by an appeal to the conduct of the Saviour, who
refused to call down fire from heaven to consume
the Samaritans, though they had most wickedly
refused him the rights of hospitality. In the
twelfth article, also, the practice of exacting a
revenue for the clergy, by adding the worldly
power of the magistrate to the spiritual censure
of the priest, is condemned as being at variance
with the lessons and examples of holy writ, and
of the fathers. It is admitted, on the other hand,
that there are some human causes, with which the
sanctions of religion might be connected, as an
auxiliary influence; but in such cases, which are
considered as extreme, it is the relation of the
supposed offence to the claims of God, which is
viewed as calling for the interposition of a species
of authority so sacred, and so widely abused.

Such, according to the paper delivered to the
prelates, was the doctrine of Wycliffe, as to the
uses of ecclesiastical censures in relation to pro-
perty. In his statement, published immediately
afterwards, it is repeated, that the employment of
the penalty of excommunication, and of the power
of the magistrate, as instruments to swell the
revenue of the priesthood, are customs which
were unknown in the better ages of christianity;

CHAP. V. and the change from the system of voluntary contribution, to that of force, is deplored as one of the worldly corruptions introduced into the church, "by her endowment under Constantine."¹⁵

But it was not only the improper application of this power, that the reformer was anxious to correct; the power itself, as generally understood, he regarded as imaginary; and the practices connected with it were devoutly opposed, as involving the most serious delusion and impiety. "We know," he observes, "that it is impossible that the vicar of Christ, merely by his bulls, though concurring with his own will, and that of his college of cardinals, should really qualify or disqualify any man. This is evident from the point of catholic doctrine which requires our Lord, in every vicarious operation, to maintain the primacy. Therefore, as in every qualifying of a subject, it is first required that the subject to be qualified should be meet and worthy of it; and as, also, in every act of disqualification, there must first be some demerit in the person disqualified requiring it; it follows, that the act of qualifying or disqualifying, is not simply from the ministry of the vicar of Christ, but from above, or from some other cause." In the thirteenth proposition, this assumption of an unconditional authority, in the forms of binding and loosing, is pronounced to be destructive of the whole catholic faith; to be a usurpation of the Lord's absolute power; and no

¹⁵ In his after notes on these articles he also states, that it may be a greater act of religious charity, under certain

circumstances, to deprive the church of her wealth, than it was to bestow it.

less than blasphemy. But while the humble worshipper is assured, that he has nothing to fear from the censures of men, so long as he shall be a follower of that which is good; he is wisely admonished, that the sentence of the priest is not to be indiscriminately contemned—since it may, in some cases, be the echo of that pronounced against him by a much higher power. The following statement includes the whole of the fourteenth article, and the sum of Wycliffe's doctrine, on what is technically designated the power of the keys. "We ought to believe, that then only does a christian priest bind or loose, when he simply obeys the law of Christ; because it is not lawful for him to bind or loose, but in virtue of that law; and, by consequence, not unless it be in conformity to it." The substance of his teaching, on this momentous question, therefore, is, — that men should render themselves familiar with what the law of God prohibits or enjoins; and confiding in their own judgment, instead of yielding their conscience to a priest, should feel dismayed by the frown of the church, and persuaded of safety as connected with her smile, only as her curse or blessing should be known to hold agreement with the recorded will of the Eternal.

Such is the sum of the reformer's opinions, as stated to the papal delegates, in the commencement of the year 1378.¹⁶ In the document which we have thus analyzed, it will be seen that there is

¹⁶ That this meeting took place early in the present year, we learn from the fact, that pope Gregory died in the following March, and his decease is

particularly deplored by Walsingham, as it proved a death-blow to the proceeds against Wycliffe.—Hist. ubi supra.

CHAP. little referring, except by way of implication,
V. to what may with strict propriety be described as theological opinion. It is highly important, indeed, as relating to such opinions, since the many things which it does imply, occur with all the certainty of direct statement. Its chief value, however, must be viewed as arising from its being a definite record of Wycliffe's sentiments, at this period, respecting the limits to be imposed on the despotic pretensions of the papacy, and on the scarcely less extravagant pretensions of the great body of the clergy in every state of christendom; also, as to the authority of the magistrate, as compared with that of churchmen; as to the legitimate means of securing to the clergy an appropriate revenue; and as to the power vested in the priest, with regard to the present character or the future allotment of the worshipper.¹⁷ On

¹⁷ All the articles included in the papers which have claimed our chief attention in this chapter, may be traced in different forms among those condemned by the council of Constance as the tenets of Wycliffe. The following is the language of its decree. "The council, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, reproves and condemns all and every one of those articles by this perpetual decree; forbidding all catholics, on pain of the anathema, to teach, preach, or hold any of those articles; and commanding all the ordinaries of places, and inquisitors of the crime of heresy, to keep a watchful eye upon and to punish the contraveners according to the canons." Lenfant's Constance, i. 198, 217—231, 414—420. Among the propositions attributed to Wycliffe in that assembly, are the following;—that God cannot annihilate

any thing—that he could not make the world less or larger; that he could not create a greater number of rational natures—that God is every creature, and that every creature is God. But it is obvious, that these statements, if not the mere inferences deduced from his doctrine by enemies, must have been accompanied by explanations consonant with Wycliffe's known piety. Thus by every creature being in God, he merely meant, as the stream is in the fountain, the ideas of their existence being coeval with the divine nature, and inseparable from it. By the other propositions, he probably meant, that the creating hand was stayed where it was best to stay; and hence, as in the articles noticed above, the attribute of omnipotence is revered, but is considered as subject to the control of wisdom and goodness.—Ibid. 419, 420.

all these topics, Wycliffe's opinions, as now re-
corded, were such as to provoke the serious dis-
pleasure of the ecclesiastical orders. But the mind
which had learned to view the spiritual weapons
of the church as powerless, except when em-
ployed according to the teaching of holy writ,
was not to be dismayed by them, as directed
against conclusions which had been adopted as
the result of much painful and devout investiga-
tion. From the partial notices of this paper by
some writers, we are left to suppose that its ex-
planations were such as to furnish but little that
could awaken the fears of the contemporary clergy.
The silence, however, which was instantly imposed
on Wycliffe, by the synod to which it is said to have
been submitted, is not the only event bespeaking
the ready perception of his judges, as to the dan-
gerous tendency of the doctrine which he had
avowed. A professor of divinity, whose zeal was
directed to familiarize the mind of his contem-
poraries with the notion of a right vested in the
laity, to judge, and even to correct their instructors
—extending this process of reform, as circum-
stances might require, to the pontiff himself,
must have been regarded by the ecclesiastics of the
fourteenth century, as no safe preceptor of youth.
And to assert the authority of the crown, as that
which should be final in determining the applica-
tions of ecclesiastical property, was also to take
a position against which provincial synods, and
the papal court, had brought their most powerful
engines of destruction. Nor was it less hazardous,
at that period, to treat the distinctions which had

CHAP. V. obtained in the hierarchy, as merely those of
——— jurisdiction, and as altogether of human origin. To proceed thus far, was sufficient to become identified with John de Ganduno, and Marcillus of Padua, names which the reader will remember are inserted in the bulls of the pontiff, as “of “condemned memory.” So extended, however, and so deeply laid, was the fabric of the reigning superstition, that every attack on its outworks must have rebounded on the head of the assailant, if its doctrine of spiritual power was allowed to be unquestioned. This successful fiction, by placing the matters of a future state at the disposal of the priesthood, was the key-stone of the structure. And it should be distinctly remembered, that against this point the greater number of the articles which Wycliffe is accused of holding was plainly directed; and that in his explanations at Lambeth, even according to the showing of his enemies, no one of the propositions relating to it was for a moment relinquished, or in the slightest degree modified.

The clergy of this period are described as believing, that their sentence of excommunication exposed the parties excommunicated to the fires of purgatory, and often to eternal torments. But if such was their faith, their frequent employment of that sentence, to avenge some trivial offence, or to extort some paltry contribution, must be viewed, as imparting a most odious aspect to their general character. The readiness, indeed, with which these censures were resorted to, throughout the middle ages, obliges us to sup-

pose, that the confidence of churchmen in the truth of this scheme, was more apparent than real. ———

To doubt this, must be to regard them, as sharing less in the nature of man, than in that of the fiend. On this subject, the religion and the humanity of Wycliffe spoke too loudly to be misunderstood. He saw the Romish polity and doctrine as artfully contrived to render ecclesiastics the representatives of the Almighty; and this, so as to furnish the means of identifying every movement opposed to their will, with whatever is revolting in impiety. It accordingly appears, and from the paper adopted by Walsingham, that to deliver the souls of men from this too successful snare, was the great solicitude of the reformer. With a view to this object, he exposes the inconsistencies, the worldliness, and the cruelty so evident in the usual exercise of that spiritual authority which the clergy had thus assumed. The maxim, “By their fruits ye shall know them,” is applied to them no less than to the laity; and to raise the popular mind from its state of entire prostration to the will of its ghostly masters, men are urged to study the principles of their faith, and doing this, to judge for themselves, with respect to every claim of their spiritual shepherds, however sanctioned by precedents or names.

The statement which we have noticed, as relating to the power of qualifying or disqualifying, treats this imposing feature of the established discipline in very general terms; such indeed, as to render it evident, that it was meant by its author to correct the errors associated with the

CHAP. sacrament of orders, as well as those which had
V.
— become connected with that of penance. By the persons having most to apprehend from such an interpretation of the articles adverted to, they appear to have been so understood. Wycliffe, indeed, never questioned the scriptural origin of priestly ordination, nor the power of the church to excommunicate the unworthy; but the corruptions which had become connected with the exercise of both functions, he condemned aloud. The efficacy of either act, was regulated, in his view, by the character of the parties in whom it should terminate. Hence, the impenitent offender, though absolved by the priest, is viewed, as still liable to his Maker's displeasure; and clerks, boasting of the sanctity which the episcopal consecration was supposed to have conferred, he often presumes to denounce, as hypocrites by profession, children of the fiend, and worse than the men of Sodom. To prove from the scriptures, and from the early fathers, that such were the doctrines of christian antiquity, was to sound the knell of priestcraft.

If the duties of the reformer, as the delegate of his sovereign, would disclose to him enough of the politics of Avignon, to confirm his disaffection to the papacy; the instructions of that power to the English prelates, which, to use his own indignant language, required them to treat him "as men do thieves," was but ill adapted to diminish his aversion. In his comment on these articles of accusation, which he published immediately after his appearance at Lambeth, it is thus he adverts to the pontiff: "Let him not be ashamed to perform the

“ministry of the church, since he is, or at least CHAP.
“ought to be, the servant of the servants of God. V. ———

“But a prohibition of reading the sacred scrip-
“tures, and a vanity of secular dominion, and a
“lusting after worldly appearances, would seem
“to partake too much of a disposition toward the
“blasphemous advancement of Antichrist, espe-
“cially while the truths of a scriptural faith are
“reputed tares, and said to be opposed to chris-
“tian truth, by certain leaders who arrogate that
“we must abide by their decision respecting
“every article of faith, notwithstanding they
“themselves are plainly ignorant of the faith of
“the scriptures. But by such means, there fol-
“lows a crowding to the court (of Rome), to pur-
“chase a condemnation of the sacred scriptures
“as heretical, and thence come dispensations,
“contrary to the articles of the christian faith.”

The work in which he thus speaks, he has de-
scribed, as “A sort of Answer to the Bull,”—
evidently meaning that which the pontiff had
addressed to the university. In his closing para-
graph he remarks, “These conclusions have I
“delivered, as a grain of faith, separated from the
“chaff by which the ungrateful tares are set on
“fire. These, opposed to the scriptures of truth,
“like the crimson blossom of foul revenge, pro-
“vide sustenance for Antichrist. Of this the in-
“fallible sign is, that there reigns in the clergy a
“luciferian enmity and pride, consisting in the
“lust of domination, the wife of which is covetous-
“ness of earthly things, breeding together the
“children of the fiend, the children of evan-

CHAP. V. “gelical poverty being no more. A judgment
 ——— “of the fruit thus produced, may be formed also
 “from the fact, that many, even of the children
 “of poverty are so degenerate, that either by what
 “they say, or by their silence, they take the part
 “of Lucifer, not being able to stand forth in the
 “cause of evangelical poverty ; or not daring, in
 “consequence of the seed of the man of sin, sown
 “in their hearts, or from a low fear of forfeiting
 “their temporalities.” The statements, however,
 which he had now published, he avows himself
 prepared to defend, “even to death, if by such
 “means he might reform the manners of the
 “church.”

Wycliffe
 assailed by
 an anony-
 mous divine

Wycliffe's escape from the snare of his adversa-
 ries, and this reiteration of his most obnoxious
 opinions, could hardly fail to provoke every kind
 of attack that might be expected to diminish his
 influence. An anonymous writer, who is de-
 scribed by the reformer, as “a motley theologian,”
 immediately assailed the point of his doctrine
 which impeached the infallibility of the pontiff.
 From Wycliffe's reply, it appears, that his anta-
 gonist had affirmed the pope to be incapable of
 mortal sin, and that he had declared, as a con-
 sequence, that whatever his holiness should ordain
 must be just. On this statement, it is remarked,
 that if it were correct, the pontiff might exclude
 any book from the canon of holy writ, and might
 introduce any novelty in its place ; that he might
 thus alter the whole bible, and make the very
 scripture heresy, establishing as catholic what is
 opposed to the truth. The reformer then adverts

to the efforts which the pontiff had made to arm CHAP.
the authority of the prelates, the court, and the V.
university against him, because he had ventured
to question this assumption, and some others,
equally impious. The remaining portion of this
tract consists of two parts ; the first, containing
a farther explanation of certain articles, in the
series already objected to him, and to which his
answers had been given ; the second, including
a spirited exhortation addressed to the influential
classes of the community, to shake off the thral-
dom, both secular and spiritual, which a foreign
power had so long imposed upon them. The arti-
cles cited are the seventh, tenth, and thirteenth,
which refer to the power of binding and loosing ;
and also the sixteenth and eighteenth. The six-
teenth relates to the office of the magistrate, with
respect to the goods of the church ; the eighteenth,
to the subjection of an offending pontiff, to the
corrective authority of the inferior clergy, and, in
extreme cases, to that of the laity. The reader
will remember, that the pope's instructions to the
archbishop of Canterbury, required him to ascer-
tain the real opinions of Wycliffe, but forbade his
proceeding to any definite sentence, until the
papal judgment should be known. In the course
of this tract, the reformer speaks of the delegates
as waiting to receive this decision before proceed-
ing to announce the fate of his conclusions ; and
he states, for their information, that according to a
report which had reached him, his doctrine re-
specting the goods of the church, and the pecca-
bility of the pope, had been denounced as in a

CHAP. special degree heretical. From these articles, he
V.
— proceeds to those which treat of the power of ab-
solution; and presuming that the decision respect-
ing them would be that the pope, and the clergy
generally, may as certainly bind and loose as the
Almighty himself, his indignation becomes impe-
tuous. The abettor of such a tenet, whoever he
may be, is not only described as a blasphemer
and a heretic, but as one whom Christians ought
not in any way to tolerate—certainly not as their
leader, since his guidance can only serve to con-
duct them in heedlessness to destruction. Secular
lords are therefore called upon to resist the arrogant
claims of the pope, and to do this not merely with
respect to the heresy which he had imposed on
them, in declaring them incompetent to withdraw
their alms from a delinquent church, nor merely
because he had condemned it as heretical to affirm
that his own distribution of the goods of the church
can be only ministerial or subordinate, but because
he had taken from them the liberty of the law of
Christ, and brought in an Egyptian bondage in its
place. It is therefore contended, that no fear of
suffering, no thirst of gain, no love of distinction,
should prevent the soldiers of Christ, as well secu-
lars as clergy, from appearing in defence of the
law of God, even unto blood! Should the lord
pope himself, or even an angel from heaven, pro-
mulgate the doctrine which confers a power of
absolving peculiar to the Deity upon a creature, it
is asserted that every member of the christian
commonwealth is bound, at such a crisis, to exert
his influence “for the saving of the faith.” It is

in the following manner, that he reasons on the bearings of that spiritual authority, which the most distinguished churchmen of the age were concerned to maintain. “ Let it once be admitted, “ that the pope, or one representing him, does “ indeed bind or loose whenever he affects to do “ so, and how shall the world stand? For if, when “ the pontiff pretends to bind all who oppose him “ in his acquisition of temporal things, either “ movable or immovable, with the pains of eternal damnation, such persons assuredly are so “ bound,—it must follow, as among the easiest “ of things, for the pope to wrest unto himself all “ the kingdoms of the world, and to subvert or to “ destroy every ordinance of Christ. And since, “ for a less fault than this usurpation of a divine “ power, Abiathar was deposed by Solomon, “ Peter was reproved to the face by Paul, nay, “ and many popes have been deposed by emperors and kings,—what should be allowed to “ prevent the faithful uttering their complaints “ against this greater injury done to their God? “ For on the ground of this impious doctrine, it “ would be easy for the pope to invert all the “ arrangements of the world; seizing, in connection with the clergy, on the wives, the daughters, and all the possessions of the laity, “ without opposition, inasmuch, as it is their “ saying, that even kings may not deprive a “ churchman of aught, neither complain of his “ conduct, let him do what he may, while obedience must be instantly rendered to whatever the pope may decree!” So unblushing

CHAP. was the tyranny of the system which Wycliffe
 ———^{V.} laboured to demolish, and so devoutly was his doctrine adjusted, to operate as an axe upon the root.¹⁸

¹⁸ Dr. Lingard, (Hist. iv. 257,) refers to Walsingham (Hist. 206, 207,) as containing the three papers produced by Wycliffe, in explanation of the articles urged against him. It is, however, the first of these only that may be found in Walsingham. Mr. Lewis, who is also referred to as having printed them, has given us the first and second; but from the third, has contented himself with extracts, and an imperfect analysis. Dr. Lingard farther observes, that these papers are without date, but that their contents seem to point out the order in which they succeeded each other, and on this authority has inverted the dates assigned to them by every previous writer. By this means Wycliffe is made to play the hero while danger is remote, and a character less reputable on its nearer approach; and the wonted ingenuity of the historian is employed to make just this impression on his readers. Dr. Lingard has abstained from any notice of the particulars which we are to suppose have warranted that disposition of these documents which he has applied to so serious a purpose. A translation of the first paper has been printed by Fox, and by Mr. Lewis; the second is in the Appendix; and the reader, by comparing them, will perceive, that there is not the remotest ground for regarding that which I have considered the second, as being really the first; on the contrary, its distinct reference to the contents of the previous document is decisive of its own sub-

sequent date. Compare article the sixth of the latter, with the sixth, sixteenth, and seventeenth of the former.

With respect to the third production, the only clause which may seem for a moment to unsettle the date assigned to it, is that in which the reformer speaks of the delegates as waiting the permission of the pontiff before delivering their judgment upon his conclusions. But even this circumstance, as explained in the text, (p. 403.) is among the proofs of its appearance as subsequent to the meeting at Lambeth. According to Dr. Lingard, Wycliffe "celebrated" his escape on that occasion "as a triumph;" and if so, the bolder tone of his second paper, the angry attack of his anonymous opponent, and his still more indignant reply, follow each other in natural order. On the other hand, an inversion of these dates, unsupported, as far as I can perceive, by the least shade of evidence, is attended by numerous difficulties, which it is hardly necessary to expose. It may be remarked, also, that the substance of the paper described by Dr. Lingard as "inflammatory," and as subsequently softened down by the fears of its author, was soon republished in the twenty-second chapter of the reformer's work on "Clerks - Possessioners;" and is still more vigorously given in the nineteenth chapter of his popular treatise, called, "The Great Sentence of the Curse Expounded."—MSS. C. C. C. Cambridge.

NOTES.

NOTE A.

“THE order of admitting none to any ecclesiastical function, except by an election of all the faithful in a general assembly, was inviolably observed, and so continued for about two hundred years; the ministers of the church and the poor subsisting all that while out of a common stock.” (Father Paul on Benefices, c. iii. 3.) “No bishop that was unknown was admitted; nor did the bishop ever ordain any, but such as were approved, or, indeed, proposed by the people, whose concurrence was thought so necessary, that the pope St. Leo proves at large the invalidity of a bishop’s ordination without it. In this all the fathers of the church in those times agree. And Constance being chosen bishop of Milan by the clergy, St. Gregory thought he could not be consecrated without the consent of the inhabitants, who being at that time retired to Genoa, to avoid the ravages of the barbarous nations, a message was first sent to them, at his instance, to know their pleasure; a thing which may justly be recommended to the observation of this age, in which we are taught that elections, wherein the people should pretend to have a share, would be unlawful and invalid. So inverted are customs, as to make good and evil change their names,—calling that lawful which was formerly reputed detestable and impious; and that unjust, which had then the

reputation of sanctity ! ” (Ibid. c. vii.) “ Charlemagne likewise restored to the cities the liberty of electing their own bishops ; and ordered that bishops should ordain such priests as should be presented to them by their parishioners.” (Ibid. c. xv.) Our reformers were not a little encouraged by such facts, in their struggle to release the power of the laity from its subjection to that of the papal priesthood.

NOTE B.

MR. TURNER, in noticing the crusades against the Albigenses, (Hist. v. 129,) observes that, “ a large portion of the warlike missionaries were Englishmen.” To ascertain the correctness of this statement, the reader is referred to the first volume of the History of England (443), where the disgrace of that memorable enterprise is divided between England, France, and the Papal power—the larger portion being attributed to the latter. I am sorry to question a single statement from the pen of an author whose general accuracy is so truly commendable. No living writer would seem to have bestowed more attention on the best authorities relating to this painful section of modern history than Sismondi ; and in his narrative, the English are also described as forming a part of the crusading army, and as exulting in the capture of Beziers, as a miracle wrought by Heaven in support of the catholic cause. But the authority in both these instances is Matthew Paris, (Hist. 332, &c.); and, as far as I can ascertain, he is alone among contemporary writers in making this assertion with respect to England. It should also be remembered, that in common with all our native historians, the Monk of St. Alban’s was but very partially informed on these subjects ; and that such was his feeling with respect to the Albigenses, that he would almost have considered it a foul spot on the fair fame of his country, had it not been allowed to share in the effort to crush them. Every thing in Sismondi’s narrative, with the exception of the solitary passage

adverted to, is opposed to the notion of many Englishmen being present in the crusading army, at any period of its operations. It is this historian who expressly affirms, that the first army was raised almost entirely from the immediate neighbourhood of Toulouse,—and those were the men who captured Beziers. In his farther descriptions of the crusaders, they are sometimes described as from the fiefs of Montfort, near Paris; sometimes as a homeless multitude, inflamed with fanaticism, or rather with the lust of slaughter and depredation: but more commonly the atrocities narrated are said to be done by “Montfort and his Frenchmen.” And the correctness of this general description is supported by the fact that in an assembly convened by Montfort at Pamiers, in 1212, five years after the raising of the first crusade, it was enacted that the widows and heiresses within his new territories should marry none but Frenchmen during the next ten years, (Sismondi, c. ii.) The period of Montfort’s activity, also, was the last seven years in the reign of John, and the two first in that of Henry the third,—an interval in which the domestic troubles of England were too great to admit of any expenditure of its strength on an object so remote as the war of Toulouse. It is true, the count of Toulouse held some cautionary lands of the king of England. The ambassadors of the English monarch, on that account, pleaded the cause of that injured nobleman before the pontiff; and apart from this circumstance, something more would perhaps have been required by Honorius, than that his vassal of England should abstain from invading the soil of France, while the soldiers of that nation were called to the pious work of destroying heretics. Perhaps the nearest approach of the English to a participation in the same honour, was in the presence of a body of men in the first crusading army, from Agenois, who were certainly subjects of the king of England, and were commanded by the archbishop of Bourdeaux, (ibid. c. i.) Opposed to the assertion of Matthew Paris, is this series of particulars, and also the silence of other writers who were certainly far better informed on these points. But if Englishmen were indeed before the walls of Beziers,—and thus much, which is all that Matthew

Paris affirms, is neither impossible nor improbable,—it is certain they were not there under authority from this kingdom. That Montfort's influence, as earl of Leicester, drew many to his standard, even from his own fiefs, is improbable, as before stated, on account of the distance of the seat of warfare, and the limited nature of feudal service. The counts of Nevers and Toulouse abandoned their enterprise at the expiration of the feudal period of forty days, and the duke of Burgundy and his followers did the same. (Ibid.)

NOTE C.

WE have the best authority for concluding, that had the papal missionaries failed to reach the shores of Saxon Britain, the faith of the gospel would have become known at no distant period to our ancestors, and that in a less objectionable form, than as imported from Rome. The civil or religious benefits resulting from the Christianity known in England, previous to the conquest, may be viewed as considerable ; but it is an important fact, and one by no means sufficiently attended to, that in the year 664, when the gospel was professed by nearly the whole island, it had been introduced and maintained in at least two-thirds of it by Scottish missionaries,—men who knew how to spurn the growing usurpations of the pontiffs, resting their own claims to a religious office on higher authority. The states of the Octarchy had their separate apostles ; these, belonging to different nations, each introduced among his converts the forms which had been sanctified by the practice of his own communion. The people of Kent, Wessex, and East-Anglia, renounced their ancient superstitions under the direction of teachers from Rome or Gaul. The East-Saxons, the Mercians, and the tribes of Bernicia, and Deiri, whose territories stretched from the mouth of the Thames and of the Severn, to the Friths of Edinburgh, were all led to their profession of the gospel by Scottish preachers, or by such natives as were indebted to them for education. Among the diversity of customs

thus introduced, the time for the celebration of Easter, and the fashion of dressing the hair to be observed by ecclesiastical persons, are particularly mentioned as forming subjects of dispute. The Roman computation required the paschal solemnities to commence on the first Sunday after the fourteenth, and before the twenty-second of the equinoctial lunation. But the Britons and Scots had been taught to commence their Easter services on the first Sunday after the thirteenth, and before the twenty-first day of the same moon. Hence, when the Sabbath occurred on the thirteenth, their rejoicings began a week earlier than those of such as were in communion with Rome.

It was in the year 664, that Oswy, who had recently united the powerful kingdom of Mercia to that of Northumbria, invited the opposing parties to meet him at Whitby. The leading disputants were patiently heard; but it was asserted, that the keys of Paradise were entrusted to St. Peter alone, and this politic tenet is said to have influenced the royal mind in favour of the papal advocates.

The decision of Oswy became an act for uniformity, and led to the ultimate expulsion of the Scottish teachers from the Anglo-Saxon territories. They saw that to conform with this enactment, would be to concede to the churches planted by the Romanists, a supremacy, on account of their connexion with the papacy, unjust in itself, and dangerous to the Christian cause. The thing required might be trivial, but the principle of subjection was not to be admitted. The scheme of usurpation thus established, had been long devised; but the sanctity and talent of Aidan, and of Finan, his successor, were the safeguard of liberty to their clergy and converts. Colman, who was next raised to the see of Lindisfarne, inherited the virtue without the ability of his predecessors, and the opportunity thus presented for encroachment was eagerly improved. It is also important to observe, respecting these injured men, these patriarchs in the cause of protestant nonconformity, that to the latest period of their influence, their piety and zeal, and learning, were all such as to extort the plaudits even

of their enemies—a fact which may in some measure account for their being abandoned by a prince, who, while giving law to the Octarchy, could reconcile the conduct of the assassin with the hope of the gospel.¹

The above statements are supported by indisputable evidence; and if correct, the question as to the extent of Anglo-Saxon obligations to papal missionaries, is not to be determined by a comparison between the paganism of the Saxon hordes on the shores of the Baltic, and the faith embraced by their descendants in England, in the days of Theodore or Bede; but between the probable influence of the faith published by the preachers above adverted to, and of that promulgated by the more effective instruments of the papal authority. For it will hardly be supposed, that the men whose zeal extended the tidings of salvation from the northern extremities of Saxon Britain to the borders of her southern provinces, were of a character to have halted even there, had not the ground been already occupied by foreign agents. If the reader will bear in mind the concession, as to the character of these instructors, which has been cited from their enemies, and connect with it what is known of the state of religion among our Saxon fathers, he will scarcely be at loss to determine whether the services rendered by St. Gregory and his monks, were such as to warrant all the boasting which is sometimes obtruded upon us. The spirit which dictated the rejecting of the claims of St. Augustine on the part of the Britons, was that which suggested the same line of conduct to the Scottish missionaries in the debates at Whitby,—the point virtually urged in both instances, and that which in both instances was indignantly spurned, being the doctrine of the pope's supremacy.

¹ Bede, Hist. iii. 14, 17, 21, 22, 25, Whitaker's Manchester, ii. c. 4, p. 88.
26. Usher's Primord. c. xii. p. 394. Turner's Anglo-Saxons, book iii. c. iv.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

Testamentum Domini Roberti Wyclyf quondam Rectoris de Rudby.

From the
Register of
T. Langley,
bishop of
Durham,
fol. 115.

IN Dei nomine, Amen—8 Sep. 1423. Ego Robertus de Wyclyf, Rector Ecclesiæ Par. de Rudby, Eboracensis Dioceseos sanæ memoriæ omnes donationes causa mortis per me ante datam presentium factas de revoco ea ceptis certis legatis per me quibusdam personis, &c. in ultimo meo eulogio assignatis, quæ quidem legata sunt inclusa in quodam rotulo sigillo meo signato: et testamentum meum ultimum, &c. condo, &c. in hunc modum. In primis commendo animam meam Deo omnipotenti Beatæ Mariæ et omnibus sanctis corpusque meum depeliendum ubi contigerit me decedere ab hac vita vel ubi executores mei disposuerint illud sepeliri. Volo tamen quod corpus meum simplici modo quo honestè possit tradatur sepulturæ. Ac quod omnia et singula debita mea seu debenda ratione ultimi vale mei ipsi Ecclesiæ integre persolvantur. Item volo quod viginti libræ dentur duobus capellanis celebraturis pro animâ meâ animabusque patris mei et matris et omnium benefactorum meorum et pro animabus omnium illorum pro quibus teneor et sum oneratus enotare. Et volo quod Johannes de Midelton sit unus de predictis capellanis, et quod celebret ut prædicitur per triennium ubicunque voluerit, capiens pro singulo anno centum solidos de summa viginti librarum predictarum. Et volo quod alius capellanus celebret per annum integrum immediate post decessum meum ubi corpus meum fuerit humatum capiens residuum summæ antedictæ. Item lego ad reparationem quatuor Ecclesiarum, videlicet Rudby, Sancti Rumaldi, Kyrkebyrawynswath et Wyclyf cuilibet illarum XL^s. Item lego cuilibet Moniali de Nun Appilton, II^s. Item lego pro seu ornamentis emendandis infra cancellum Ecclesiæ de Wyclyf, XL^s. Item lego XL^s. distribuendos pauperibus infra parochiam de Wyclyf. Item lego ad reparationem pontis de Rudby, XX^s. Item lego cuilibet capellanorum stipendiariorum Rectoriæ de Rudby celebranti ad capellas infra parochiam de Rudby, VI^s. VIII^d. Item lego cuilibet capellano et cuilibet fratri hospitalis de Kepier VI^s. VIII^d. Item lego cuilibet pauperi scolari

sedenti ad skepham infra aulam predicti hospitalis 11^s. Item lego Emmotæ Mylner, Isotæ Sollay et Cristianæ Kendall videlicet cuilibet illarum 6^s. 8^d. Item lego cuilibet ordini Fratrum mendicantium videlicet Allerton, Richemond, et Hertipole 20^s. et Fratribus de Zarme 26^s. 8^d. Et lego cuilibet servienti meo transeunti ad carucam et custodienti averia mea ultra salaria sua 11^s. 4^d. Et residuum vero summæ c librarum de quibus condo testamentum meum ac etiam omnium et singulorum bonorum meorum mobilium et mihi de quibuscunque personis debitorem do et lego executoribus meis ut et ipsi inde provideant faciant et disponant pro salute animæ meæ secundum quod eis videbitur melius expedire. Et ad hoc testamentum meum bene et fideliter perficiendum et implendum ordino et constituo Christopherum de Boynton Henricum Nersefeld Johannem de Midelton capellanum et Thomam Nele executores meos et unicunque illorum 12^s. pro labore suo assigno. Et super visores hujus testamenti ordino et constituo Johannem Langton militem manentem juxta Shirburne in Elvet et Robertum de Eure Com. Dunelm. In cujus rei testimonium huic presenti testamento sigillum meum opposui. His testibus Johanne Runhcorne capellano Thoma Tange et Roberto Berehalgh notariis publicis Thoma Morpath et Alano Shirebum capellanis. Data apud Kepier supradict, die et anno Domini supradictis.

No. II.

MS. in Bibl.
Lam.
No. 104, fol.

*Specialis Licentia Domini Regis Edwardi III. pro appropriatione
Advocationis Ecclesiæ de Pageham, Aulæ Cantuariensi in
Oxonia.*

EDWARDUS Dei gratia Rex Angliæ, Dominus Hiberniæ et Aquitaniæ, omnibus ad quos præsentis hæ pervenerint, salutem. Sciatis quod de gratia nostra speciali, et ad devotam supplicationem venerabilis Patris Simonis Cant. Archiepiscopi totius Angliæ Primatis, et Apostolicæ sedis Legati pie desiderantis incrementum salubre cleri regni nostri propter multiplicationem doctrinæ salutaris, quæ jam per præsentem epidemiam noscitur plurimum defecisse, Concessimus et licentiam dedimus pro nobis et hæredibus nostris, quantum in nobis est, eidem Archiepiscopo, quod ipse in Universitate Oxon. quandam Aulam sive Domum Aulam Cantuariensem vulgariter et communiter vocitandam, in qua certus erit numerus scholarum tam religiosorum quam secularium artibus scolasticis insistentium et Deo pro nobis et salute Regni nostri specialiter exorantium secundum formam ordinationis inde per eundem Archiepiscopum super hoc faciendæ, suis sumptibus erigere poterit et fundare, et eisdem scholaribus in perpetuum assignare, et in eventu quo Domus sive Aula sit fundata, et scolares in ea assignati fuerint, Advocationem Ecclesiæ de

Pageham suæ jurisdictionis immediatæ, quæ est de advocatione sua propria, et de jure suo Archiepiscopali, et quæ de nobis tenetur in capite, ut dicitur, eisdem scholaribus, et successoribus suis dare possit, et etiam assignare, habendum et tenendum præfatis scholaribus et successoribus suis de nobis et hæredibus nostris in liberam et puram et perpetuam elemosinam in perpetuum; et eisdem scholaribus quod ipsi tam aulam quam advocationem prædictas a præfato Archiepiscopo recipere, et Ecclesiam illam appropriare, et eam sic appropriatam in proprios usus tenere possint sibi et successoribus suis prædictis, pro nobis et salute Regni nostri oraturi juxta ordinationem prædicti Archiepiscopi, de nobis et hæredibus nostris in liberam et puram et perpetuam elemosinam in perpetuum sicut prædictum est, Tenore præsentium similiter licentiam dedimus specialem, statuto de terris et tenementis ad manum mortuam non ponendis edito non obstante, Nolentes quod prædicti Archiepiscopus vel successores sui aut præfati scholares seu successores sui ratione præmissorum, seu statuti prædicti, aut pro eo quod dicta advocatio de nobis tenetur in capite, sicut prædictum est, per nos vel hæredes nostros Justitiæ Estaetores, Vicecomites, aut alios ballivos seu ministros nostros quoscunque occasionentur, molestentur in aliquo seu graventur. Salvis tamen nobis et hæredibus nostris, ac aliis capitalibus Dominis feodi illius servitiis inde debitis et consuetis. In cujus rei testimonium has literas nostras fieri fecimus patentes. Teste-meipso apud Westmonasterium xx^o. die Octobris anno regni nostri tricesimo quinto.

A.D. 1361.

No. III.

Charta Foundationis Aulæ Cantuariensis, et Donationis Manerii de Wodeford Lincoln. Dioceseos dictæ Foundationi.

MS. in
Bibl. Lam.
No. 104, fol.

SAPIENTIA Dei Patris per uterum Beatæ Virginis volens prodire in publicum sicut ætate proficere voluit sic gratiæ et sapientiæ suæ munera paulatim aliis proficiendo secundum processum ætatis suæ magis ac magis realiter ostendebat, ut alii qui ab ejus plenitudine fuerint particulariter sapientiam recepturi prius humiliter addiscerent et proficiendo crescerent in doctrina, posteaque quod sic didicerint aliis salubriter revelarent. Quia igitur per sapientiam sic non absque sudore et laboribus adquisitam reguntur regna et in justitia confoventur, Ecclesia militans germinat et sua diffundit tentoria: Nos Simon permissione Divina Cantuariensis Archiepiscopus totius Angliæ Primas et Apostolicæ sedis Legatus, ad hæc sepius revolventes intima cordis nostri, ac considerantes viros in omni scientia doctos et expertos in epidinnis præteritis plurimum defecisse, paucissimosque propter defectum exhibitionis ad præsens insistere studio literarum, de magnificæ Trinitatis gratia, et meritis beati Thomæ martyris patroni nostri firmiter confidentes, de

bonis nobis a Deo collatis Aulam quandam in Universitate Oxon. et nostræ provinciæ de consensu et licentia serenissimi principis Domini Edwardi Regis Angliæ illustris, in loco quem ad hoc nostris sumptibus comparavimus, construximus et fundavimus, quam pro duodenario studentium numero duximus ordinandum. In partem igitur dotis et sustentationis ipsius Collegii octo hospitia conductitia juxta situm loci in quo habitationem hujusmodi studentium assignavimus consistentia, quæ gravibus sumptibus nostris et expensis propterea specialiter adquisivimus per hanc Cartam nostram conferimus et donamus, et etiam assignamus: Maneriumque de Wodeford Lincoln. Dioceseos ad perdilectum Nepotem nostrum Willelmum de Islep spectans cum omnibus suis pertinentiis eidem collegio procuravimus assignari. Datum apud Maghfeld Idus Aprilis Anno Domini 1363, et nostræ Consecrationis xiv.

Instrumentum præcedentis Cartæ.

MS. in
Bibl. Lam.
No. 104, fol.

IN Dei nomine, Amen. Per præsens publicum instrumentum omnibus innotescat, quod Anno ejusdem Domini 1363, secundum computationem Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ, Indictione secunda Pontificis sanctissimi in Christo Patris et Domini Domini Urbani digna Dei providentia Papæ Quinti anno secundo, mensis Februarii die quarto, coram Reverendo in Christo Patre Domino Simone Dei gratia Cant. Archiepiscopo, totius Angliæ Primate, et Apostolicæ sedis Legato, in Camera sua infra Manerium suum apud Cherryng Cant. Dioceseos personaliter constituto, producta fuit, exhibita et lecta quædam carta ipsius patris sigillo mei notarii subscripto satis noto consignata, quam idem Dominus Archiepiscopus asseruit se fecisse, et contenta in eadem rata, grata et firma se habere velle perpetuis temporibus valiturum: Cujus quidem Cartæ tenor de verbo ad verbum sequitur in hæc verba. *Sapientia Dei Patris per uterum Beatæ Virginis volens prodire, &c.* Consecrationis xiv. acta fuerunt hæc anno indictionis Pontificiæ, mense, die et loco prædictis præsentibus venerabili in Christo Patre Domino Willelmo Dei gratia Episcopo Roffensi, Magistris Nicholao de Chaddesden, Legum Doctore Canonico Ecclesiæ Lichfieldensis, Cancellario dicti Domini Archiepiscopi, Willelmo Tankerville Rectore Ecclesiæ de Lawfar London. Johanne Barbo Clerico Roffensis Dioceseos testibus ad præmissum rogatis.

Et Ego Richardus Wodelond de Calceto Clericus Cicestrensis Dioceseos, notarius Apostolica auctoritate publicus, productioni, exhibitioni, et lecturæ Cartæ prædictæ assertioni et ratihabitioni dicti Domini Archiepiscopi ac omnibus et singulis prout superius scribuntur et recitantur una cum præfatis testibus interfui, eaque omnia et singula sic vidi fieri et audiui veramque copiam sive transcriptum ipsius Cartæ superius descriptæ aliis negotiis occupatus per alium scribi feci, et hic me subscripsi et signum meum apposui præsentibus consuetum.

Willelmi de Islep confirmatio prædictæ Donationis Manerii de Wodeford.

SCIANT præsentēs et futuri quod Ego Wellelmus de Islep ad instantiam Domini mei Domini Simonis Dei gratia Cant. Archiepiscopi totius Angliæ Primatis et Apostolicæ sedis Legati, dedi, concessi, et hac præsentī cartā meā confirmavi Custodi et Clericis Aulæ Collegiatæ Cant. per ipsum Dominum meum in Universitate Oxon. noviter fundatæ, Manerium meum quod habeo in Wodeford cum omnibus suis pertinentiis in Comitatu Northampton, habendum et tenendum prædictum Manerium cum omnibus suis terris, pratis, pascuis, pasturis, redditibus, homagiis, servitiis, stagnis, vivariis, aquis molendinis, gardinis, columbariis cum omnibus aliis suis pertinentiis prædictis, Custodi et Clericis et eorum successoribus in perpetuum tenendum de capitalibus Dominis feodi per servitia inde debita, et de Jure consueta. In cujus rei testimonium sigillum meum præsentibus apposui, his testibus, venerabili in Christo Patre Domino Willelmo Dei gratia Roffensi Episcopo, Magistro Nicholao de Chaddesden Legum Doctore Cancellario, Domino Johanne Waleys milite, Dominis Thoma de Wolton seneschallo terrarum et Willelmo Islep cruciferario dicti Domini Archiepiscopi et multis aliis. Et ad majorem securitatem præmissorum Ego Willelmus de Islep supradictus præsentem cartam subscriptione et signi appositione Magistri Richardi Wodeland Clerici Notarii auctoritate Apostolica publici ad requisitionem meam specialem feci et obtinui communiri. Datum apud Maghefeld quarto die mensis Junii anno Domini millesimo ccclxiii. et anno Regni Regis tertii post conquestum xxxvii.

MS. in
Bibl. Lam.
No. 104, fol.

Et Ego Richardus Wodeland de calceto Clericus Cicestrensis Dioceseos Notarius Apostolica auctoritate publicus dationi, et confirmationi, et concessionī prædictis, et sigilli appositioni cartæ prædictæ una cum suprascriptis testibus, loco, die, mense et anno Domini supradictis, indictione prima Pontificis sanctissimi in Christo Patris et Domini Domini Urbani digna Dei providentia Papæ quinti anno primo, præsens interfui et præfatum Willelmum de Islep dictam cartam perlegere audivi, et ad rogatum dicti Willelmi hic me subscripsi, et signum meum apposui præsentibus consuetum in testimonium præmissorum.

No. IV.

Instrumentum Collationis Johannis de Wyclyve Guardianatui Aulæ Cantuariensis in Universitate Oxoniæ.

Historia et
Ant. Oxon.
p. 184. Ex
Registro
Islep in
Archivis
Lambeth-
anis, fol. 306.

SIMON, &c. Dilecto filio Magistro Johanni de Wyclyve salutem. Ad vitæ tuæ et conversationis laudabilis honestatem, literarumque scientiam, quibus personam tuam in artibus magistratum altissimus insignivit, mentis

nostræ oculos dirigentes, ac de tuis fidelitate, circumspectione, et industria plurimum confidentes, in custodem Aulæ nostræ Cantuar. per nos noviter Oxoniæ fundatæ te præficimus, tibi que curam et administrationem custodiæ hujusmodi incumbentes juxta ordinationem nostram in hac parte committimus per præsentem, reservata nobis receptione juramenti corporalis per te nobis præstandi debiti in hac parte. Dat. apud Maghefeld v^o idus Decemb. anno Domini MCCCLXV. et nostræ XVI.

No. V.

Eccel.Christ.
Cant. Reg.
K. fol. 67.

Verba Ordinationis quoad Custodem Aulæ Cantuar. Domino Archiepiscopo nominandum.

———— et debet ipse præfici sicut cæteri monachi officarii dictæ Ecclesiæ per Dominum Archiepiscopum præficiendi viz. Prior et Capitulum eligent de toto Capitulo tres personas ydoneas et meliores in religione et scientia ad dictam Curam, et eos in scriptura communi Domino Archiepiscopo nominabunt quorum unum ex illis sic nominatis quem voluerit Archiepiscopus præficiet in Custodem, Curam et Administrationem tam spiritualium quam temporalium ad ipsam Aulam pertinentium sibi plenius committendo.

No. VI.

Nominatio Custodis Aulæ Cant. noviter fundatæ in Universitate Oxon. per Reverendum Patrem Dominum Simonem de Islep Archiepiscopum Cantuariensem.

REVERENDO in Christo Patri ac Domino, Domino Simoni Dei gratia Cant. Archiepiscopo totius Angliæ Primati, et Apostolicæ sedis Legato, Vestri humiles et devoti Prior et Capitulum Ecclesiæ Christi Cant. obedientiam, reverentiam et honorem. Ad curam et officium Custodis Aulæ Cantuar. in Universit. Oxon. per vos noviter fundatæ Fratres Henricum de Wodhulle sacre pagine Doctorem, Johannem de Redyngate et Willielmum Rychemond nostros confratres et commonachos Vobis juxta formam et effectum Ordinationis vestræ factæ in hac parte, Tenore presentium nominamus. Supplices quatinus unum ex illis tribus sic nominatis quem volueritis in Custodem dictæ Aulæ præficere, et eidem curam et administrationem tam spiritualium quam temporalium ad ipsam Aulam pertinentium committere dignetur vestra paternitas reverenda, quam ad Ecclesiæ suæ Regimen conservet in prosperis Trinitas indivisa. Dat. sub sigillo nostro communi in Domo nostra Capitulari Cant. XIII die Martii anno Domini millesimo ccc^{mo}. LXII^{do}.

No. VII.

JOHANNES de Radyngate Monachus Cant. factus est Custos Aulæ Cant. Regist.
Langham.
fol. 98.
Oxon. a Simone Langham Archiepiscopo Cant. Anno 1367º 11 Cal. Apr.
Mandatum tamen revocatum est ab Archº x Cal. Maii sequentis et Hen-
ricus de Wodhall Monachus Cant. factus Custos directo ad Joannem
Wycliff et cæteros scholares Aulæ Cant. mandato ut obedirent ei.

No. VIII.

Mandatum Apostolicum ad exequendam sententiam Cardinaliis MS. in.
Bibl. Lam.
No. 104, fol.
Andruyni contra Wiclyffum.

URBANUS Episcopus servus servorum Dei, venerabili fratri Episcopo Londoniensi, et dilectis filiis Abbati Monasterii sancti Albani, Lincoln. Dioceseos, ac Archidiacono Oxon. in Ecclesia Lincoln. Salutem et Apostolicam benedictionem. Petitio dilectorum filiorum Prioris et Capituli Cant. Ecclesiæ ordinis Sancti Benedicti nobis exhibita continebat quod licet Collegium Aula Cant. nuncupatum scholarum Universitatis Oxon. Lincoln. Dioces. in quo quidem Collegio nonnulli Clerici et scholares esse consueverant, per unum ex Monachis dictæ Ecclesiæ qui Custos dicti Collegii esse tres alios Monachos dictæ Ecclesiæ secum habere debet, prout in ipsius Collegii fundatione extitit Canonice ordinatum, regi debent: Tamen dilecti filii Johannes de Wycliff, Willelmus Selbi, Willelmus Middleworth, Richardus Benger, Clerici Eboracensis, Saresburiensis et Oxon. Dioceseos false asserentes dictum Collegium per Clericos seculares regi debere, dictumque Johannem fore Custodem Collegii supradicti, ac Henricum de Wodehall Monachum dictæ Cant. Ecclesiæ ac Custodem dicti Collegii, ac nonnullos Monachos dictæ Ecclesiæ cum præfato Henrico in dicto Collegio commorantes de ipso Collegio excluserunt, ipsosque Collegio ipsis ac bonis inibi existentibus in quorum possessione iidem Henricus et alii Monachi existebant, spoliarunt, et nonnulla alia in ipsorum Monachorum præjudicium acceptarunt, nec non omnia bona dicti Collegii occuparant, propter quod dilectus filius noster Simon t. t. sancti Sixti Presbyter Cardinalis tunc Archiepiscopus Cant. videns et prospiciens hujusmodi bona dicti Collegii per dictum Johannem et alios Clericos supradictos qui ipsius Johannis consortes erant dissipari, fructus parochialis Ecclesiæ de Pageham Cicestrens. Dioc. sub Jurisdictione Archiep. Cant. pro tempore existentis, consistentis sequestrari fecit, orta que propterea inter Johannem de Wycliff et ejus consortes ex una parte et dictum Cardinalem super præmissis et eorum occasione ex altera, materia quæstionis. Nos tamen hujusmodi cum partes ipsæ in Romana Curia sufficienter præsentis existerent, bonæ memoriæ Andruyno

t. t. sancti Marcelli presbytero Cardinali ad earum partium instantiam audiendam commisimus, et fine debito terminandam. Et quod idem Andruynus Cardinalis prout ei melius et utilius pro statu dicti Collegii videretur expedire posset a dicto Collegio Clericos seculares amovere, vel si ei utilius videretur pro Collegio supradicto religiosos supradictos ab ipso Collegio auctoritate prædicta amovere, ita quod unicum et solum Collegium regularium vel secularium remaneret, cum potestate etiam in dicta causa simpliciter, et de plano, ac sine strepitu et figura judicii procedendi. Coram quo Magistris Richardo Bangero procuratore Johannis et ejus consortium prædictorum, ac Alberto de Mediolano per Magistrum Rogerum de Treton, procuratorem dictorum Simonis Cardinalis, nec non Prioris et Capituli prædictorum. Qui quidem Prior et Capitulum pro interesse suo ad causam hujusmodi veniebant, substituto donec eum revocaret prout eum ad hoc ab ipsis Simone Cardinale ac Priore et Capitulo sufficiens mandatum habebat in judicio comparentibus tandem postquam inter partes ipsas coram eodem Cardinali ad nonnullos actus in causa hujusmodi processum fuerat, præfatus Richardus quandam petitionem summariam pro parte sua exhibuit in causa supradicta. Postmodum vero nos eidem Andruyno Card. commisimus ut in causa hujusmodi sola facti veritate inspecta procedere, etiam terminis secundum stilum palatii Apostolici servari consuetis non servatis, postmodum vero præfatus Rogerus coram eodem Andruyno Card. in judicio comparens nonnullas positiones et articulos quandam petitionem summariam in eorum fine continentes pro parte sua tradidit in causa supradicta, ac deinde cum generales vacationes in dicta Curia de mandato nostro inditæ fuissent. Nos eidem Andruyno Cardinali commisimus ut in causa hujusmodi procedere et partes ipsas per suas literas portis Ecclesiæ Viterbiensis affigendas citare posset quociens opus esset, non obstantibus vacationibus supradictis. Idemque Andruynus Cardinalis ad ipsius Rogeri instantiam præfatum Johannem Wycliff et ejus consortes, cum dictus Richardus procurator in dicta curia diligenter perquisitus reperiri non posset per suas certi tenoris literas portis dictæ Ecclesiæ Viterbiensis affixas ad producendum et ad produci videndum omnia jura et munimenta quibus partes ipsæ vellent in causa hujusmodi uti, citari fecit ad certum peremptorium terminum competentem in quo præfatus Rogerus coram eodem Andruyno Cardinali in judicio comparens prædictorum citatorum non comparentium contumaciam actitavit et in ejus contumaciam nonnullas literas autenticas instrumenta publica et alia jura et munimenta quibus pro parte sua in hujusmodi causa voluit uti produxit, idemque Andruynus Cardinalis ad ipsius Rogeri instantiam prædictum Richardum tunc in prædicta Curia repertum ad dicendum contra eadem producta quidquid vellet per portarium suum juratum citari fecit ad certum peremptorium terminum competentem, in quo præfatus Rogerus coram eodem Andruyno Cardinali in judicio comparens prædicti Ricardi non comparentis contumaciam accentuavit, præfatusque Andruynus Cardinalis ad dicti Rogeri instantiam prædictum Ricardum ad concludendum et concludi videndum in causa hujusmodi vel dicendum causam rationabi-

lem quare in ea concludi non deberet, per portarium suum juratum citari fecit ad certum terminum peremptorium competentem, in quo Magistro Johanne Cheyne substituto de novo per dictum Rogerum donec eum revocaret, prout ad hoc a præfatis Dominis suis sufficiens mandatum habebat coram eodem Andruyno Cardinali in judicio, comparente, et dicti Ricardi non comparentis contumaciam actitante, et in ejus contumaciam in hujusmodi causa concludi petente, supradictus Andruynus Cardinalis reputans eundem Richardum quoad hoc, prout erat merito contumaciæ in ejus contumaciam cum dicto Johanne Cheyne in hujusmodi causa concludente, conclusit et habuit pro concluso. Subsequenter vero præfatus Andruynus Cardinalis prædictos Johannem de Wyclyff et ejus consortes, cum dictus Richardus procurator latitaret et diligenter perquisitus in præfata Curia reperiri non posset, ad suam in causa hujusmodi diffinitivam sententiam audiendam per suas certi tenoris literas portis dictæ Ecclesiæ Viterbiensis affixas citari fecit, ad competentem peremptoriam certam diem, in quo dicto Rogero coram eodem Andruyno Cardinali in judicio comparente, et dictorum citatorum non comparentium contumaciam accusante, et in eorum contumaciam sententiam ipsam ferri petente, memoratus Andruynus Cardinalis reputans eosdem citatos quoad actum hujusmodi, prout erant merito contumaces in eorum contumaciam visis et diligenter inspectis omnibus et singulis actibus actitatis habitis et productis in causa hujusmodi coram eo, ipsisque cum diligentia recensitis et examinatis, habito super his consilio cum peritis per suam diffinitivam sententiam ordinavit, pronunciavit, decrevit et declaravit solos Monachos prædictæ Ecclesiæ Cant. Secularibus exclusis debere in dicto Collegio, Aula [Cantuar.] nuncupato, perpetuo remanere, ac exclusionem et spoliationem contra prædictos Monachos per dictum Johannem de Wyclyff et ejus consortes prædictos attemptatas fuisse, et esse, temerarias, injustas et de facto præsumptas, easque in quantum de facto processerint, revocandas et irritandas fore, et quantum in eo fuit revocavit et irritavit. Et Henricum ac alios Monachos supradictos sicut præmittitur, spoliatos et de facto exclusos ad Collegium nec non omnia bona mobilia et immobilia supradicta restituendos et reintegrandos fore, ac restituit et reintegravit, nec non fructuum sequestrationem ad utilitatem dictorum Monachorum relaxavit. Et insuper Johanni de Wyclyff et ejus consortibus supradictis super præmissis perpetuum silentium imponendum fore et imposuit prout in instrumento publico inde confecto dilecti filii nostri Bernardi duodecim Apostolorum Presbyteri Cardinalis, cui nos præfato Andruyno Cardinali antequam instrumentum super hujusmodi sententiam confectum sigillasset vita functo, commisimus ut instrumentum sigillaret, sigillo munito plenius dicitur contineri. Nos itaque dictorum Prioris et Capituli supplicationibus inclinati hujusmodi diffinitivam sententiam utpote proinde latam, ratam habentes et gratam, eamque autoritate Apostolica confirmantes discretioni vestræ per Apostolica scripta mandamus, quatenus vos vel duo aut unus vestrum per vos vel alium seu alios sententiam ipsam executioni debite demandantes, eamque ubi et quando expedere videritis, auctoritate nostra solempniter publicantes Henricum et alios monachos

prædictos ad dictum Collegium, Aula [Cant.] nuncupatum, nec non ejus bona mobilia et immobilia supradicta, amotis exinde dictis Johanne de Wyclyff et ejus consortibus prædictis, auctoritate nostra restitnatis, et reintegretis, ac restitutos et reintegratos juxta illius exigentiam defendatis Contradictores per Censuram Ecclesiasticam appellatione postposita
 A. D. 1370. compescendo. Dat. Viterbii v. idus Maii Pontificatus nostri anno octavo.

No. IX.

MS. in
 Bibl. Lam.
 No. 104, fol.

*Regia Pardonatio omnium Foris facturarum Aulæ Cantuarien.
 et eidem pertinentium, et Confirmatio Papalis Sententiæ De-
 privationis Wicliffe.*

EDWARDUS Dei gratia Rex Angliæ et Franciæ et Dominus Hiberniæ :
 Omnibus ad quos præsentēs literæ pervenerint salutem. Sciatis quod cum nuper ut accepimus de gratia nostra speciali et ad devotam supplicationem Simonis tunc Archiepiscopi Cant. qui de Islep cognominatus extiterat pie desiderantis incrementum salubre Cleri nostri propter multiplicationem doctrinæ salutaris per literas nostras patentes sub magno sigillo nostro concesserimus et licentiam dederimus pro nobis et hæredibus nostris quantum in nobis erat eidem Archiepiscopo quod ipse in Universitate Oxon. quandam Aulam sive Domum Aulam Cant. vulgariter et communiter vocitandam, in qua certus foret numerus scholarium tam Religiosorum quam Secularium actibus scolasticis insistentium, et Deo pro nobis et salute Regni nostri specialiter exorantium, secundum ordinationis formam inde per eundem Archiepiscopum super hoc faciendæ, suis sumptibus erigere possit et fundare, et eisdem scholaribus in perpetuum assignare, et in eventu quo Domus sive Aula sic fundata et scolares in ea assignati forent, advocationem Ecclesiæ de Pageham Jurisdictionis ipsius Archiepiscopi immediatæ, quæ quidem Ecclesia de advocatione propria ejusdem Archiepiscopi, ut de jure suo Archiepiscopali extiterat, et quæ quidem Advocatio de nobis tenebatur in capite, ut dicebatur, eisdem scholaribus dare posse et etiam assignare habendum et tenendum præfatis scholaribus et successoribus suis de nobis et hæredibus nostris in liberam puram et perpetuam elemosinam in perpetuum, et eisdem scholaribus quod ipsi tam Aulam quam advocationem prædictas a præfato Archiepiscopo recipere, et Ecclesiam illam appropriare, et eam sic appropriatam in proprios usus tenere possent sibi et successoribus suis prædictis pro nobis et salute regni nostri oraturi juxta ordinationem prædicti Archiepiscopi de nobis et hæredibus nostris in liberam puram et perpetuam elemosinam in perpetuum sicut prædictum est: Dictusque Archiepiscopus postmodum juxta dictam licentiam nostram quandam Aulam Collegiatam sub certo scholarium studentium numero in

Universitate prædicta vocabulo Aulæ Cantuariensis erexerit, et fundaverit, certosque Monachos Ecclesiæ Christi Cant. unum videlicet Monachum Custodem Aulæ ejusdem, cæterosque scolares in eadem una cum certis aliis scholaribus secularibus in Aula prædicta ordinaverit et constituerit, et eis Aulam illam, nec non advocationem prædictam dederit et assignaverit eisdem Custodi et Scholaribus et successoribus suis perpetuo possidendas, ipsique Custos et Scolares dictas Aulam et advocationem a præfato Archiepiscopo receperint, ac Ecclesiam prædictam sibi et successoribus suis in proprios usus una cum Aula prædicta in perpetuum habendam appropriaverit, ac deinde *præter licentiam nostram supradictam* amotis omnino per prædictum Archiepiscopum dictis Custode et cæteris Monachis Scholaribus videlicet regularibus ab Aula prædicta, idem Archiepiscopus quendam scolarem Custodem dictæ Aulæ, ac cæteros omnes scolares in eadem scolares duntaxat constituerit eisdem Custodi et Scholaribus secularibus duntaxat in proprios usus perpetuo possidendam dederit et assignaverit, ipsique Custos et Scolares seculares duntaxat Aulam et Ecclesiam prædictam ex tunc continuatis temporibus durante vita præfati Archiepiscopi possederit tam fructus dictæ Ecclesiæ quam alia bona ad Aulam prædictam spectantia usibus suis propriis applicaverit, et demum defuncto dicto Archiepiscopo et Reverendo in Christo Patre Simone t. t. sancti Sixti, Presbytero Cardinali tunc in Archiepiscopum Cant. consecrato idem Archiepiscopus tunc Cardinalis fructus dictæ Ecclesiæ de Pageham sequestrari fecerit, ortaue præterea inter dictos Custodem et Scholares seculares ex parte una et præfatum Cardinalem super præmissis, et eorum occasione ex altera materia contradictionis, appellationeque interposita, et habito inde processu, Romana Curia autoritate Apostolica videlicet felicis recordationis Domini Urbani Papæ quinti per diffinitivam sententiam de facto ordinatum fuerit ibidem pronunciaverit, decreverit et declaraverit solos Monachos prædictæ Cantuariensis Ecclesiæ, secularibus exclusis, debere in dicto Collegio Aula nuncupato perpetuo remanere, nec non dictos Monachum Custodem ac alios Monachos Scholares sic de facto ut præmittitur a dicto Collegio ac bonis inibi existentibus in quorum possessione fuerant per amotionem hujusmodi et occupationem dictorum secularium Custodis et Scholarium secularium spoliatos et exclusos ad Collegium illud, nec non ad omnia bona supradicta, et omnia alia bona mobilia et immobilia dicti Collegii per eosdem secularem Custodem et Scholares seculares post amotionem prædictam occupata restituendos et reintegrandos fore, ac jam Dilecti nobis in Christo Prior et Conventus Ecclesiæ Christi Cant. antedictæ virtute dictorum ordinationis, procurationis, decreti et declarationis auctoritate Apostolica factorum uti præmittitur, quendam, ut asseriter, Commonachum suum ejusdem Ecclesiæ Christi Custodem dicti Collegii Aulæ nuncupati, ac certos alios Commonachos suos dictæ Ecclesiæ Christi scolares in eodem Collegio ordinaverint et constituerint, amotis dictis secularibus ab eodem penitus et exclusis, *contra formam licentiæ nostræ supradictæ*. Nos quanquam dicta advocatio Ecclesiæ de Pageham per aliquem progenitorum nostrorum una cum aliquibus prædiis seu tenementis in dotationem, funda-

tionem seu alias in augmentationem Archiepiscopatus Cantuariensis, seu Ecclesiae Christi Cantuar. antedictae data, concessa seu assignata extiterat, volentes nihilominus ob devotionem sinceram quam ad dictam Ecclesiam Ecclesiae Christi Cant. et beatum Thomam Martyrem quondam ejusdem Ecclesiae Archiepiscopum, cujus corpus gloriose cathalogo sanctorum ascriptum quiescit honorabiliter in eadem, securitati tam dictorum Prioris et Conventus quam Commonachorum suorum, quos ipsi Prior et Conventus Custodem dicti Collegii et Scholares in eodem jam, ut praemittitur, ordinarunt, et in futurum ordinaverint, provide de gratia nostra speciali et pro ducentis marcis quos dicti Prior et Conventus nobis solverunt in hanaperio nostro perdonavimus omnes transgressionem factas nec non foris facturam si qua dictae Aulæ cum pertinentiis et advocationis praedictae virtute statuti de terris et tenementis ad manum mortuam non ponendis editi vel alias nobis intensa fuerit in hac parte, dictamque sententiam, ordinationem, pronuntiationem, decretum et declarationem auctoritate Apostolica factam, ut praedictum est, et executionem eorundem pro nobis et hæredibus nostris, quantum in nobis est, acceptamus, approbamus, ratificamus, et confirmamus, volentes, et concedentes pro nobis et hæredibus nostris, quantum in nobis est, quod praedicti Custos et cæteri Scholares Regulares dicti Collegii Aulæ Cant. nuncupati Monachi dictae Ecclesiae Christi Cant. et eorum successores per praedictos Priorem et Conventum constituti, et per eosdem Priorem et Conventum et eorum successores constituendi, seu alias loco amovendorum substituendi, actibus scolasticis juxta ordinationem ipsorum Prioris et Conventus et successorum suorum religiose insistentes Aulam praedictam, tenementaque in ipsa contenta cum pertinentiis, nec non Ecclesiam praedictam, et advocationem ejusdem in usus proprios ipsorum Custodis et scholarium Regularium teneant videlicet dictam Aulam, et praedicta tenementa cum pertinentiis, quæ de nobis in burgagium tenentur, ut dicitur, de nobis et hæredibus nostris, ac aliis Capitalibus Dominis feodi per servitia inde debita et consueta, et dictas Ecclesiam et advocationem de nobis et hæredibus nostris in liberam puram et perpetuam elemosinam ad orandum specialiter pro salute animæ nostræ et pro animabus progenitorum nostrorum ac hæredum nostrorum in perpetuum sine occasione vel impedimento nostro vel hæredum nostrorum, Justitiæ Estretorum viæ aut aliorum ballivorum, seu ministrorum nostrorum vel hæredum nostrorum quorumcunque statuto vel forisfactura praedictis aut dictis, dotationem, concessionem, seu assignationem advocationis praedictae per aliquem progenitorum nostrorum in dotationem, foundationem, vel alias in augmentationem Archiepiscopatus seu Ecclesiae Christi praedictorum, seu dictam foundationem per praefatum Simonem de Islep quondam Archiepiscopum tam pro studentibus sive scholaribus Regularibus quam Secularibus factæ, ut praemittitur, seu aliquo alio præmissorum non obstantibus. In cujus rei testimonium has literas nostras fieri fecimus patentes. Teste me ipso apud Westm. octavo die Aprilis Anno Regni nostri Angliæ quadragesimo sexto, Regni

A. D. 1372. vero nostri Franciæ tricesimo tertio.

No. X.

*Pro Johanne de Wiclif et aliis de potestatibus ad tractandum
cum Nunciis Papæ.*

Rymeri
Fœdera,
tom. vii. p.
41. An. 48.
Edw. III.
A. D. 1374.

REX Universis ad quorum notitiam præsentis literæ pervenerint, salutem.

Sciatis quod nos de fidelitate et circumspectione venerabilis Patris
Johannis Episcopi Bangoriensis,

Ac fidelium nostrorum

Magistri Johannis de Wiclif sacræ Theologiæ Prof.

Magistri Johannis Guteri Decani Segobiensis,

Magistri Simonis de Multon Legum Doctoris,

Willelmi de Burton Militis,

Roberti Bealknap, et

Johannis de Kenyngton,

plenam fiduciam reportantes, ipsos ad partes transmarinas Ambassatores,
Nuncios et Procuratores nostros speciales destinamus ;

Dantes eisdem Ambassatoribus, Nunciis et Procuratoribus, sex vel
quinque eorum (quorum præfatum Episcopum unum esse volumus) aucto-
ritatem, et potestatem, ac mandatum speciale tractandi et benigne ac
caritative consulendi cum Nunciis et Ambassatoribus Domini summi
Pontificis, super certis negotiis, pro quibus præfatos Episcopum et Wil-
helmum, ac fratrem Ughtredum Monachum Dunolmensem, et Magistrum
Johannem de Shepeye ad sedem Apostolicam nuper miseramus ;

Et Relationem plenariam super hiis quæ inter eos tractata et consulta
fuerint nobis et concilio nostro faciendi :

Ut ea quæ honorem sanctæ Ecclesiæ et Conservationem Jurium Coronæ
nostræ, et Regni nostri Angliæ, concernere poterunt in ea parte intuitu
Dei et sanctæ sedis Apostolicæ, feliciter expediantur, et debitum capiant
complementum.

In cujus, &c.

Dat. apud London. vicesimo sexto die Julii.

No. XI.

Bulla Gregorii XI. missa Oxonii studio.

Walsingh.
Hist. Ang.
p. 201.

GREGORIUS Episcopus servus servorum Dei, dilectis filiis Cancellario et
Universitati studii Oxoniensis, Lincoln. diœc. salutem, et apostolicam
benedictionem. Mirari cogimur et dolere, quod vos propter gratias et
privilegia vestra, studio Oxoniensi ab Apostolica sede concessa, et
propter scientiam scripturarum, in quarum pelago fœlici remigio (dante
Domino) navigatis, tanquam pugiles et propugnatores orthodoxæ fidei

(sine qua salus animarum non provenit) esse deberetis, lollium inter purum triticum campi gloriosi studii vestri prædicti per quandam desidiam et ignaviam premittitis pullulare, et quod est perniciosius etiam adolere, nec circa extirpationem hujus lollii (sicut nuper apud nos insonuit) curam aliquam adhibetis, non sine clari nominis obfuscatione, et animarum vestrarum periculo, et contemptu Ecclesiæ Romanæ, et memoratæ fidei detrimento. Et quod nos torquet acerbius, prius de incremento lollii prædicti sentitur in Roma quam in Anglia, ubi tamen extirpationis remedium apponeretur. Multorum siquidem fide dignorum insinuatione admodum dolentium nostris est auribus intimatum, Johannem Wycklef Rectorem Ecclesiæ de Luttelworth Lincolniensis diœc. sacræ paginæ professorem, utinam non magistrum errorum, in illam detestabilem erupisse vecordiam, nonnullas propositiones et conclusiones erroneas et falsas, ac pravitate hæreseos sapientes, quæ statum totius Ecclesiæ, et etiam secularem policiam subvertere et enervare nituntur, quarumque aliquæ, licet quibusdam mutatis terminis, sentire videntur perversas opiniones et doctrinam indoctam damnatæ memoriæ Marsilii de Padua et Johannis de Gandavo, quorumlibet per fœlicis recordationis Johannem Papam XXII. Prædecessorem nostrum reprobatus extitit et damnatus, in regno Angliæ nempe glorioso potentia et copia facultatum, sed gloriosiore pietate fidei rutilante, sacræ paginæ claritate consueto viros producere, divinarum scripturarum recta scientia illustratos, morum gravitate maturos, devotione conspicuos, et catholicæ fidei defensores, dogmatizare, et publice prædicare, seu potius de virulento claustrisui pectore evomere non veretur, nonnullos Christi fideles earum respersione commaculans, et a fidei præfatæ recta semita in præcipitium perditionis abducens. Quare cum tam lethiferam pestem, cui si ejus non obstetur principiis et ipsa radicitus evellatur sero posset medicina parari quum per contagionem plurimos infecisset, nolumus prout nec velle debemus sub conniventia pertransire. Universitati vestræ per Apostolica scripta in virtute sanctæ obedientiæ, ac sub pœna privationis omnium gratiarum, indulgentiarum, et privilegiorum vobis ac studio vestro a dicta sede concessorum, districte præcipiendo mandamus, quatenus conclusiones et propositiones in bonis operibus et fide male sentientes, licet eas proponentes sub quadam verborum sive terminorum curiosa implicatione nitantur defendere, de cætero non permittatis asseri vel proponi: Dictumque Johannem autoritate nostra capiatis, seu capi faciatis, et ipsum venerabilibus fratribus nostris Archiepiscopo Cantuar. et Episcopo Londoniensi, aut eorum alteri sub fida custodia transmittatis. Contradictores quoque de dicto studio vestræ Jurisdictioni subjectos, si qui forsan (quod Deus avertat) essent hujusmodi erroribus maculati, si in illis pertinaciter perstiterint, ad similem captionem et missionem, aliasque prout ad vos spectat, firmiter et sollicite procedatis, perinde vestram suppleturi diligentiam, hactenus in præmissis remissam, nostramque et dictæ sedis, præter divinæ retributionis præmium et meritum, gratiam et benevolentiam adepturi. Dat. Romæ apud sanctam Mariam majorem xi. Calendas Junii, Pontificatus nostri anno septimo.

No. XII.

Bulla Papalis missa Archiepiscopo Cantuar. et Episcopo Londoniensi ad monendum Regem et Magnates Angliæ, ne prædicto Johanni Wyclef faveant, vel adhæreant quovismodo.

Walsingh.
Hist. Ang.
p. 202.

GREGORIUS servus servorum Dei, venerabilibus fratribus Cantuar. Archiepiscopo et Episcopo Londoniensi salutem. &c. Super periculosis admodum erroribus quarundam detestabilium propositionum et conclusionum ad enervationem totius ecclesiastici status tendentium, scriptas in schedula inclusa præsentibus, quas Johannes Wycklef rector Ecclesiæ de Lutterworth Lincolniensis dioc. dictus Theologiæ Professor, asseritur tam impie quam temere suscitasse, plenius vobis scribimus, per alias nostras patentes literas, quas cum præsentibus destinamus. Volumus igitur et vestræ fraternitati mandamus quatenus clarissimum in Christo, Edwardum regem Angliæ illustrem, et dilectos filios nobiles viros natos dicti Regis, ac dilectam in Christo filiam nobilem mulierem Johannam principissam Aquitaniæ et Walliæ, et alios magnates de Anglia et consiliarios regis per vos et alios magistros et peritos in sacra pagina, non maculatos hujusmodi erroribus, sed in fide sinceros et fervidos studeatis facere, plenarie informari, ac eis ostendi, quanta verecundia devoto regno Angliæ oriatur exinde, et quod non solum sunt ipsæ conclusiones erroneæ in fide, sed si bene advertantur, innuunt omnem destruere Politiam. Et requiratis eos strictissime, quod extirpationem tantorum errorum, pro reverentia Dei et Apostolicæ sedis et nostra, ipsorumque merito apud Deum et honorem seculo, tanquam Catholici principes et pugiles dictæ fidei, omni qua poterunt efficacia tribuant auxilium et favorem. Dat Romæ apud sanctam Mariam majorem xi. Cal. Junii, Pontificatus nostri anno septimo.

Lutter-
worth.

No. XIII.

Bulla Papalis ad incarcerandum Johannem Wyckliff et eum citandum ad personaliter comparendum coram Papa.

Walsingh.
Hist. Ang.
p. 202.

VENERABILIBUS fratribus Archiepiscopo Cantuar. et Episcopo Londoniensi salutem, &c. Nuper per nos non sine gravi cordis turbatione, et plurium fide dignorum relatione, percepto quod Johannes Wicklef rector Ecclesiæ de Lutterworth Lincolniensis dioc. sacræ paginæ professor, utinam non magister errorum, in tam detestabilem vesaniam

temere prorupit, quod nonnullas propositiones et conclusiones erroneas ac falsas et male in fide sonantes, quæ statum totius Ecclesiæ subvertere et enervare nituntur, quarumque aliquæ (quibusdam mutatis terminis) imitari videbantur perversas opiniones, et doctrinam indoctam damnatæ memoriæ Marsilii de Padua, et Johannis de Gandavo, quorumlibet per felicis recordationis Johannem Papam XXII. prædecessorem nostrum reprobatus extitit et damnatus, non verebatur in regno Angliæ asserere, dogmatizare, et publice prædicare, illis nonnullos Christi fideles maligne inficiens, ac a fide catholica (sine qua non est salus) faciens deviare. Nos attendentes quod tam perniciosum malum quod in plurimos serpere poterat, eorum animas læthali contagione necando, non debebamus, prout nec debemus sub dissimulatione transire, vobis per alias literas nostras commisimus et mandavimus, ut vos vel alter vestrum de dictarum propositionum et conclusionum assertione, quarum copiam sub bulla nostra misimus interclusam, vos secrete informantes, si ita esse inveniretis, præfatum Johannem autoritate nostra capi et carceribus mancipari faceretis, eumque sub bona custodia teneretis in vinculis, donec a nobis super hac reciperetis aliud in mandatis, prout in dictis literis plenius continetur. Considerantes utique quod præfatus Johannes hujusmodi captionem et carcerationem forte præsentiens, posset (quod absit) perfugere, seu latitationis præsidio dictum nostrum mandatum in gravissimum fidei detrimentum eludere: Nos (ne tam damnabiles propositiones et conclusiones indiscussæ, et earum temerarius assertor impunitus remaneret in detrimentum gravissimum fidei prælibatæ) fraternitati vestræ per Apostolica scripta committimus et mandamus, quatenus vos vel alter vestrum per vos vel alium seu alios, præfatum Johannem, si per vos capi et incarcerari non possit, per edictum publicum proponendum in studio Oxoniæ Lincolniensis diœc. et aliis locis publicis, de quibus fit verisimilis conjectura, quod ad dicti Johannis notitiam pervenire valeat, et de quibus vos expedire videatur, ex parte nostra peremptorie monere et citare curetis, quod infra trium mensium spacium a die citationis hujusmodi in antea computandum, ubicunque tunc nos esse contigerit, comparere ac personaliter coram nobis super propositionibus et conclusionibus hujusmodi responsurus, ac auditurus et facturus quicquid super eis duxerimus ordinandum, et ordo dictaverit rationis, prædicando in hujusmodi citationis edicto, quod sive idem Johannes in hujusmodi termino comparuerit, sive non comparuerit, nos super præmissis, et contra eum usque ad debitam condemnationem ipsius inclusive procedemus, prout ejus demerita exigent, ac nobis secundum Deum et conservationem fidei videbitur expedire. Volumus autem et præsentium tenore statuimus, quod prædicta citatio sic facta, provide præfatum Johannem arctet, ac si sibi personaliter insinuata et intimata fuisset, constitutione quacunque contraria non obstante. Diem vero citationis, et formam, et quicquid feceritis in prædictis, nobis per vestras literas sigillis munitas harum seriem continentes, fideliter et quam citius poteritis, intimare curetis. Dat. Romæ apud sanctam Mariam majorem XI. Calendarum Junii, Pontificatus nostri anno septimo.

No. XIV.

Bulla Papalis Archiepiscopo Cantuariensi, &c. ad carcerandum Johannem Wycklef, et recipiendam ejus Confessionem.

Walsingh.
Hist. Ang.
p. 203.

VENERABILIBUS fratribus Archiepiscopo Cantuariensi et Episcopo Londoniensi salutem, &c. Regnum Angliæ glorioſum nempe potentia et abundantia facultatum, ſed glorioſius pietate fidei, et ſacræ paginæ claritate coruſcum, conſuevit viros producere divinarum ſcripturarum recta ſcientia præditos, maturitate graves, devotione præclaros, et pugiles fidei orthodoxæ, et qui non ſolum proprios, ſed alienos populos documentis inſtruebant veriſſimis, et in mandatorum Domini ſemitam derigebant. Et ſicut ex effectu contingentium temporis antiqui colligitur, dicti regni præſules in ſpecula ſollicitudinis poſiti, proprias excubias exercentes ſollicite, non permittebant aliquod oriri erroneum quod poſſet inficere oves ſuas, ſed ſi oriretur zizania ex inimici hominis inſperſione, illam protinus evellebant, creſcebat aſſidue purum triticum in dominicum horreum inferendum. Sed (proh dolor) nunc apparet quod in ipſo regno officio vigiles, negligentia vero deſides, non circumſtant civitatem, dum hoſtes ingrediuntur in eam, animarum theſaurum preciſiſſimum prædantur. Quorum latentes ingreſſus, et patentes aggreſſus prius ſentiuntur in Roma intercapedine longa remota, quam eis in Anglia reſiſtatur. Sane plurimum fide dignorum ſignificatione admodum dolentur audivimus, quod Johannes Wycklef rector Eccleſiæ de Littleworth Lincolniensis diœc. ſacræ paginæ Profeſſor, utinam non magiſter errorum, in illam deteſtabilem veſaniam dicitur temere prorupiſſe, quod nonnullas propoſitiones et concluſiones erroneas et falſas in fide male ſonantes, quæ ſtatum totius Eccleſiæ ſubvertere et enervare conantur, quarumque aliquæ, licet aliquibus quibusdam mutatis terminis, ſentire videntur perversas opiniones et doctrinam indoctam damnatæ memoriæ Marſilli de Padua, et Johannis de Ganduno, quorumlibet per fœlicis recordationis Johannem Papam XXII. predeceſſorem noſtrum reprobatuſ extitit et damnatuſ, non veretur in præfato regno aſſerere, dogmatizare, et publice prædicare, nonnullos Chriſti fideles eis maligne inficiens, ac a fide catholica (ſine qua non eſt ſaluſ) faciens deviare, de quibus ſic ſubortis, et non extirpatis, ſeu ſaltem eis nulla facta reſiſtentia, quam ſciamuſ, ſed tranſactis ſeu tolleratis conniventibus oculis tam negligentur tranſeundo, non immerito deberetis rubore perfundi, verecundari, et in propriis conſcientiis remorderi. Quare cum tam pernicioſum malum, quod non præciſum ſeu radicituſ extirpatuſ ſerpere poſſet in plurimuſ in animabuſ eorum (quod abſit) læthali contagione necandoruſ, nolumuſ (ſicut nec debemuſ) ſub diſſimulatione tranſire. Fraternitati veſtræ per Apoſtolica ſcripta committimuſ et mandamuſ, quatenuſ receptis præſentibuſ, voſ vel alter veſtrum de dictarum propoſitionuſ et concluſionuſ aſſertione, quarum copiam vobis mittimuſ ſub Bulla noſtra incluſam, voſ ſecrete informantuſ, ſi inveneritiſ ita eſſe,

præfatum Johannem faciatis autoritate nostra capi, et carceribus mancipari, ejusque confessionem super eisdem propositionibus seu conclusionibus recipere studeatis, ac ipsam confessionem, et quæcunque dictus Johannes dixerit seu scripserit, super earundem propositionum et conclusionum inductione ac probatione, et quicquid feceritis in præmissis sub vestris sigillis clausa, et nemini revelata nobis per fidelem nuncium transmissuri, eundemque Johannem sub fideli custodia teneatis in vinculis, donec a nobis super hoc aliud receperitis in mandatis. Contradictores, &c. Invocato, &c. Non obstantibus fœlicis recordationis Bonifacii Papæ VIII. Predecessoris nostri constitutionibus, in quibus cavetur ne aliquis extra suam civitatem vel diœc. nisi in certis exceptis casibus, et in illis ultra unam dietam a fine suæ diœc. ad judicium evocetur, seu ne iudices a sede apostolica deputati aliquos ultra unam dietam a fine suæ diœc. evocare præsumant, et de duabus dietis in consilio generali, ac expansionis et aliis privilegiis, constitutionibus, et literis apostolicis Prædicatorum, Minorum, et Hæremitarum sancti Augustini, et sanctæ Mariæ de monte Carmeli, et aliis quibuscunque medicantium, vel aliis ordinibus et locis, aut specialibus personis seu capitulis et conventibus ipsorum generalibus vel specialibus, quorumcunque tenorum existant, necnon statutis et consuetudinibus eorundem ordinum, et locorum contrariis, per quæ effectus præsentium impediri valeat quomodolibet vel differri etiamsi de eis eorumque totis tenoribus ac de verbo ad verbum plena et expressa mentio in nostris literis sit habenda, seu si Johanni prædicto vel quibusvis aliis communiter vel divisim a dicta sede sit indultum, quod personaliter capi, aut quod jus dici, suspendi, vel excommunicari non possint per literas Apostolicas non facientes plenam et expressam, ac de verbo ad verbum de indulto hujusmodi mentionem Dat. Romæ apud S. Mariam majorem XI. Cal. Junii, anno 27.

No. XV.

Walsingh.
Hist. Ang.
p. 204.

Epistola Papæ ad Regem Edwardum III. ad exhibendum sui Favoris et Auxilii Patrocinium Archiepiscopo Cant. et Episcopo Londinensi in Prosecutione Johannis Wicliffe.

CHARISSIMO in Christo Filio Edwardo Regi Angliæ illustri, salutem, &c. Regnum Angliæ quod Altissimus tuæ supposuit potestati, gloriosum nempe potentia et abundantia facultatum, sed gloriosius pietate fidei, et sacræ paginæ claritate coruscum, consuevit viros producere divinarum scripturarum recta scientia præditos, maturitate graves, devotione ferventes, et catholicæ fidei defensores, qui non solum proprios, sed alienos populos præceptis salutaribus instruebant, dirigebantque in divinatorum semitam mandatorum. Sed nuper cum ingenti cordis amaritudine pluri-

morum fide dignorum significatione percepimus, Johannem de Wicklef rectorem Ecclesiæ de Luttelworth Lincoln. diœcesis, sacræ paginæ professorem, utinam non magistrum errorum, in illam nefandam et abhominabilem prorupisse dementiam, quod nonnullas propositiones et conclusiones plenas erroribus, et manifestam hæresim continentes, quæ statum totius Ecclesiæ subvertere et enervare nituntur, quarumque aliquæ, licet quibusdam mutatis terminis, sentire videntur perversas opiniones, et doctrinam indoctam damnatæ memoriæ Marsilii de Padua et Johannis de Ganduno, quorumlibet per fœlicis recordationis Johannem Papam XXII. prædecessorem nostrum reprobatus extitit et damnatus, in dicto regno dogmatizare et publice prædicare, seu potius de virulento clauastro sui pectoris evomere non veretur, nonnullos Christi fideles earum respersione commaculans, et a præfatæ fidei recta semita in præcipitium perditionis abducens. Nos itaque tantum malum quod non præscisum seu radicitus extirpatum serpere posset in plurimos, in animabus eorum (quod absit) læthali contagione necandos, nolentes prout nec velle sine nostræ morsu conscientiæ possumus, conniventibus oculis, pertransire, venerabilibus fratribus nostris Archiepiscopo Cantuariensi, et Episcopo Londinensi per litteras nostras commisimus et mandavimus, ut ipsi vel alter eorum, receptis per eos dictis nostris literis, de dictarum propositionum et conclusionum assertionem, quarum copiam eis sub bulla nostra misimus interclusam, se informantes (si invenirent ita esse) facerent præfatum Johannem auctoritate nostra capi et carceribus mancipari, ejus confessionem super eisdem propositionibus seu conclusionibus recipere studerent, ac ipsam confessionem et quæcunque dictus Johannes dixerit vel scripserit super earundem propositionum et conclusionum inductione et probatione, nobis per fidum nuncium transmittere non postponant. Cum itaque dicti Archiepiscopus et Episcopus in prosecutione hujus negotii noscantur favore et auxilio tuæ Celsitudinis indigere, Majestatem tuam quam et tui Progenitores incliti catholicæ fidei, cujus in hac parte res agitur, semper consueverunt esse præcipui zelatores, requirimus et deprecamur attente quatenus ob reverentiam Dei, dictæ fidei, et Apostolicæ sedis, et nostrum intuitum digneris præfatis Archiepiscopo et Episcopo, et aliis qui hujusmodi negotium persequentur, in ipsa prosecutione tui Favoris et Auxilii Patrocinium exhibere provide, præter humanæ laudis præconium, divinæ retributionis præmium, nostram et dictæ sedis adepturus benevolentiam ampliorem. Datæ Romæ apud Sanctam Mariam majorem XI. Cal. Junii, anno 7.

No. XVI.

Inter MSS. Seldeni Archi. B. 10. *Ista est Protestatio Reverendi Doctoris una cum ejus Conclusionibus quæ ab eo in subscripta forma sunt posite, quæ in consimilibus materiis, et dissimilibus formis sunt et fuerunt reportate et ad Curiam Romanam transmissæ, et sic in multis minus bene impositæ.*

^a Sic pro halitus.

PROTESTOR publice ut sepe alias quod propono et volo esse ex integro Christianus, et quamdiu manserit in me ^aalitus, profitens verbo et opere legem Christi. Quod si ex ignorantia vel quacunque alia causa in isto defecero, nunc prout extunc idem revoco et exsecro, submittens me humiliter correctioni sanctæ Matris Ecclesiæ.

1. *Totum genus humanum concurrentium citra Christum non habet potestatem simplicem ordinandi ut Petrus et omne genus suum dominetur in perpetuum politice supra mundum.* Istud concedo ex fide Scripture; cum oportet omnem civilitatem cessare ante finale judicium, cum prima ad Corinth, xv. Apostolus loquens de die Judicii ita scribit, *Demum finis, cum tradiderit regnum Domino et Patri, cum evacuaverit omnem principatum et virtutem.* Qui ergo credit carnis resurrectionem credit istum articulum, cum amplius non est exactio vel conversatio secularis. Nemo ergo habet potestatem ordinandi quicquid contra decretum Domini in hac parte.

2. *Deus non potest dare homini pro se et heredibus suis in perpetuum civile dominium.* Pro isto suppono quod in perpetuum sumatur proprie, et famose utatur more Ecclesiæ orantis ut Trinitati sit *Gloria nunc et in perpetuum.* Suppono secundo quod civile dominium intelligatur formaliter pro illo quo quis civiliter dominetur. Et tertio quod sit locutio de Dei potestate ordinata, et tunc consequitur ex priori. Loquendo autem de Domini potentia absoluta, videtur multis probabile quod Deus non potest continuare eternaliter viationem sponse sue, eo quod tunc fraudaret eam a præmio, aut corpori diaboli injuste differret dare penam quam meruit.

3. *Carte humanitus adinvente de hereditate perpetua sunt impossibiles.* Ista conclusio fuit lateraliter dicta uni Doctori magnificanti cartas hominum, scriptura professionis Christianæ postposita, melius, inquam, foret defensione et expositioni scripture attendere, cum multe carte hujusmodi sint impossibiles. Concedo ergo conclusionem, cum multe carte affirmant de multis exheredatis et mortuis intestate, quod dantur eis pro se et heredibus in perpetuum certa dominia. Quod cum obviat ordinationi Divinæ non oportet canonizare cartas singulas scripturam fidei contempnendo.

4. *Quilibet existens in gratia gratum faciente finaliter nedum habet jus ad rem, sed pro suo tempore jus in ^b rem super omnia bona Dei.* Probatur ex fide Scripture satis famose Mat. xxiv. *Super omnia bona sua constituet*

^b Sic MSS. pro re.

eum. Juncto illo Apostoli ad Rom. viii. Deus proprio filio suo non pepercit, sed pro nobis omnibus tradidit illum, quomodo non cum ipso omnia nobis donavit? Tres ergo prime conclusiones imprimunt mundialibus fidem Christi, ne submergantur in pelago seculi transeuntis cum concupiscentia ejus: Et quarta allicit hominem ad amorem Domini qui dilexit nos ad tot veras divitias.

5. *Homo potest solum ministratorie dare tam naturali filio quam filio imitationis temporale dominium et eternum implicitum. Probatur per eundem* ^c *Sic MS. Luc. vi. Mensuram bonam et confertam et coagitatam et supereffluentem* ^{pro illud.} *dabunt in sinum vestrum. Et quod solum ministratorie ex hoc probatur, quod non licet pure homini dare aliquid nisi tanquam ministro Dei, juxta illud Apostoli prima ad Corinth. iv°. Sic nos existimet homo ut ministros Christi. Unde Christus fuit verus minister ecclesie, dicente Apostolo ad Rom. xv. Dico enim Jesum Christum ministrum fuisse. Non ergo erubescat ejus vicarius fungi ministerio ecclesie, cum sit, vel esse debet, servus servorum Domini. Nam determinatio a modo legendi sacre Scripture, et fastus secularis domini, cum pruriente stilo seculari, videtur nimis disponere ad blasphemam extollentiam Antichristi; specialiter si veritates fidei Scripture reputentur lollium, fidei Christiane contrarium ab illis capitaneis qui presumunt quod decreto eorum in omni materia fidei oportet stare, quamcunque ignari fuerint fidei scripturarum. Sic enim posset esse concursus ad Curiam ad emendum dampnationem Scripture sacre tanquam heretice et dispensationem contra articulos fidei Christiane.*

6. *Si Deus est, Domini temporales possunt legitime ac meritorie auferre bona fortune ab ecclesia delinquente. Pro isto suppono quod loquamur de posse, ut loquitur Scriptura rectissima et summe auctentica, Mat. iii. Potens est Deus de lapidibus istis suscitare filios Abraham, &c. Concedo ergo Conclusionem tanquam correlariam primo articulo fidei. Nam si Deus est, ipse est omnipotens; et si sic, ipse potest dare dominis secularibus hujusmodi potestatem: Et per consequens ipsi possunt meritorie ac legitime sic uti hujusmodi potestate. Sed ne Conclusio sit ex remotione impertinens, ostendi quod domini temporales habent potestatem* ^d *auferendi] suas elemosinas collatas ecclesie, ipsa illis elemosinis abu-* ^{d abest in MS.} *tente: Et quod talis ablatio foret in casu spirituale opus misericordie, salvans animam a gehenna, et impetrans utrumque beatitudinem. Collatio vero talis elemosine preter vel contra religionem quam Christus instituit, relevat corpus a temporali miseria tanquam elemosina corporalis. Et ut videtur, sicut dotatio potest esse occasio beatitudinis, sic verisimilius ablatio. Dixi tamen quod hoc non licet facere nisi autoritate ecclesie in defectu spiritualis prepositi, et in casu quo ecclesiasticus corripiendus fuerit a fide dignis.*

7. *Scimus quod non est possibile ut vicarius Christi pure ex bullis suis, vel ex illis cum volitione et concensu suo, aut sui collegii quenquam habiliter vel inhabilitet. Probatur ex fide Scripture, qua credit ecclesia quod oportet omnem habilitationem hominis primo a Domino procedere. Nullus autem Christi vicarius in isto habet potestatem, nisi vicarie in nomine Domini*

notificare ecclesiæ quem Deus habilitat. Ideo si quicquam facit non vicarie in nomine Domini, quem propter opus suum recognoscit vel recogitat auctorem, est Luciferina presumptio, cum secunda ad Corinth. iii. dicat Christus in suo Apostolo : *Omnis vestra sufficientia ex Domino est.*

8. *Non est possibile hominem excommunicari ad sui dampnum, nisi excommunicetur primo et principaliter a seipso.* Probatur eo, quod omnis talis excommunicatio sapit excommunicati deteriorationem. Sed nemo potest, secundum Chrysostomum et Scripturam sacram, deteriorari, nisi ledatur per peccatum quod oportet trahere originem a peccante. Nam meritoria suspensio hominis a Sacramentis, et ingressu Ecclesie non est excommunicatio nisi equivoce. Et quantum ad rationem meriti, est prius ab excommunicatio quam a Christi vicario excommunicante. Nemo enim dampnificatur si non per peccatum subtraheretur Divinum subsidium; ut probatur Ysa. lix. *Iniquitates vestre diviserunt inter vos et Dominum vestrum.*

9. *Nemo debet nisi in causa Dei excommunicare, suspendere, interdicere, vel secundum quamcunque censuram ecclesiasticam vindicando procedere.* Probatur ex hoc quod nemo debet vindictam expetere nisi in causa justitie : Omnis causa justitie est causa Dei, cum ipse sit fons justitie, ergo concludo. Cum enim ex peccato originatur omnis talis punitio, omne vero peccatum sit in Dominum, juxta illud Psalmi l. *Tibi soli peccavi :* Probatur quod nemo, nisi ad vindicandum Dei injuriam, debet ad punitionem talem procedere. Nam ex fide Scripture nemo debet vindictam capere, nisi secundum rationem, qua fit injuria Domino suo, rationem personalis injurie remittendo, ut probatur de precepto Christi Mat. xviii. *Si peccaverit in te frater tuus, dimitte ei usque septuagies septies.*

10. Ex istis probatur decima Conclusio : *Quod maledictio vel excommunicatio non ligat simpliciter, nisi de quanto fertur in adversarium legis Christi.* Probatur sic; Nam talis maledictio non ligat quoad Deum, nisi de quanto ligatus offendit in legem suam, sed non ligat nisi de quanto ligaverit quoad Deum : Ergo concludo. Si enim Deus gratificat, quis est qui condempnet? Deus autem non offenditur nisi fuerit propter adversantiam legis sue. Et isti Articuli juvant ut lex Christi sit carior, cum oportet ipsam esse regulam dirigentem in quocunque processu legitimo, et ut fides Scripture ad Rom. xii. melius imprimatur, *Non vosmet ipsos defendentes, charissimi, sed date locum ire : Scriptum est enim, Mihi vindicta, et ego retribuam.*

11. *Non exemplata potestas a Christo suis discipulis excommunicandi subditum præcipue propter negationem temporalium, sed e contra.* Probatur ex hoc, quod Christus docet honorem Dei et utilitatem ecclesie ante personale commodum, vel negationem temporalium preferendum. Et secunda pars probatur per illud Luc. ix. ubi prohibuit suos discipulos volentes ignem de celo descendere, ad excommunicandum infideles injuste detinentes a Christo et suis discipulis bona sua. *Nescitis, inquit, cujus spiritus estis; filius enim hominis non venit animas perdere, sed salvare.* Unde Conclusio Catholica est, quod non licet Christi vicario excommunicare proximum, nisi propter amorem quo plus sibi afficitur quam

omnibus temporalibus hujus mundi. Et probatur negativa conclusio inductive ac per deducens ad impossibile quod tunc fuisset in Christo est et non.

12. *Discipuli Christi non habent potestatem ad, coactione civili, exigendum temporalia per censuras.* Probatur de Apostolis et aliis Christi discipulis usque ad dotationem Ecclesie: Qui in quantalibet magna egestate fidelium non exercuerunt hujus potestatem, sed hortati sunt secundum legem Dei, et devotum ministerium ad tales benedictiones[†] que debent esse elemosine voluntarie. Sed ^e priusquam dota est[†] ecclesia, commixte sunt ^e pro. post. confusim talis palliata censura et secularis exactio. Immo probatur ^{quam.} quod donatio civilis Luc. xxii. fuit Christi discipulis prohibita.

13. *Non est possibile de Dei potentia[†] absoluta, quod si Papa vel alius Christianus prætendat se quovismodo solvere vel ligare, eo ipso sic solvit vel ligat.* Probatur ex hoc, quod omnis Christianus posset in hoc errare difformiter ab ecclesia triumphante, tunc autem non ligaret aut solveret ut pretendit: Ergo non potest esse quod si pretendit se ligare vel solvere, ita facit. Unde videtur mihi quod usurpans sibi hanc potestatem foret ille homo peccati de quo 2^{da} ad Tessal. 2^o scribitur: quod in templo Domini sedeat, et ostendat se tanquam esset Deus.

14. *Credere debemus quod tunc[†] solum ligat vel solvit simpliciter Christi vicarius quando conformiter legi Christi.* Probatur ex hoc, quod omnis potestas Christi vicarii solum tunc est in effectum legitima quando beneplacito capitis ecclesie regulatur et regitur.

15. *Hoc debet credi catholice quod quilibet sacerdos rite ordinatus secundum legem gratie habet potestatem secundum quam potest sacramenta ministrare, et per consequens sibi confessum de quocunque peccato contritum absolvere.* Probatur ex hoc, quod potestates ordinum in quibuscunque Christi sacerdotibus sunt equales, ut declarat Hugo 2^o de Sacramentis. Alique tamen potestates ordinum equales aliis in substantia rationabiliter sunt ligatæ que possunt solvi ad ministrandum, ut dicit conclusio.

16. *Licet Regibus, in casibus limitatis a jure, auferre temporalia a viris ecclesiasticis, ipsis habitualiter abutentibus.* Probatur de ratione posita in quinta Conclusionem. Nam ad opera magis meritoria et Dominis temporalibus magis facilia sunt ipsi domini magis obligati. Sed foret in casu major elemosina atque facilius dominum temporalem subtrahere elemosinam suam ab edificante ad [†] gehennam per ejus abusum, quam donare [†] gehennam. dictam elemosinam ad subsidium corporale: Ergo concludo. Unde secundum legem triplicem specificatur ista sententia. *Prima* est lex civilis de causis corradæ collatione 10^a. *Si Clericus, inquit lex, veluti Episcopus, vel Abbas habens beneficium a Rege datum, non solummodo persone sed ecclesie ipsum propter culpam suam perdat, eo vivente, ad Regem pertineat; post mortem vero clerici ad successorem revertatur.* *Secunda* lex est Canonica 16. q. 7. c. filiis sic dicitur, filiis vel nepotibus ac honestioribus propinquis ejus qui construxit vel dotavit ecclesiam licitum sit hanc habere solertiam ut si sacerdotem aliquem ex collatis rebus defraudare præviderint, aut honesta conventionem compescant, aut Episcopo vel Judici corrigenda denuncient: Quod si Episcopus fuerit negligens, dicatur Metropolitano: Et tertio in eorum negli-

gentia debet, ut dicit canon Regis auribus intimari. Nec credo id fingibile ad quid Regi denuncient nisi ut ipse correctionem adhibeat. Nec dubium quin correctio Regi pertinentior atque salubrior in hac parte foret bonorum, quorum est capitalis Dominus, subtractio proportionaliter ad delictum.

g Sic MS.
pro 39.

h Sic MS.

pro quoniam

Tertia lex est Evangelica 2^{da} ad Tessal. § 2^o, ubi Apostolus sic scribit: Cum essemus apud vos, hoc denunciabamus vobis, ^h quum si quis non vult operari, non manducet. Jus ergo nature licentia habentes regnorum gubernacula, rectificare abusus temporalium qui precipue destruerent regna sua.

17. *Sive Domini temporales, sive quicunque alii dotaverint ecclesiam temporalibus, licet eis in casu auferre temporalia medicinaliter ad cavenda peccata, non obstante excommunicatione vel alia censura ecclesiastica, cum non nisi sub conditione implicita sunt donata. Probatur ex hoc, quod per se conditio consequens ad donationem bonorum ecclesie est, ut Deus honoretur et Ecclesia edificetur: Que conditio si defuerit, succedente opposito, probat quod perit titulus donationis, et per consequens dominus dans elemosinam rectificare debet errorem. Excommunicatio autem non debet obstare justitie complemento; quia sic posset clericus per excommunicationem reparatorie^l conquirere totum mundum.*

i Sic MS.

18. *Ecclesiasticus, etiam Romanus Pontifex potest legitime a subditis corripri ad utilitatem Ecclesie, et tam a clericis quam a laycis accusari. Prima pars probatur eo quod omnis talis ecclesiasticus est frater noster peccabilis, et per consequens ex lege correptionis fraterne potest corripri. Unde Mat. xviii. Si peccaverit in quocunque assistens de possibili opportunitate debet eum corripere. Et per idem, si fuerit obstinata defensio pravitatis heretice, vel alterius peccati vergentis ad spirituale dampnum ecclesie, debet in casu penes superiores accusari, ad finem ut ex ejus correctione periculum ecclesie caveatur. Sic enim reprehensus est Petrus a Paulo ad Gal. 2^o, et multi Papæ irregulares per Imperatores depositi, ut narrat^k Castrensis in sua Policronica libro 5^o. Ecclesia enim est supra istum pontificem: Ideo dicere quod iste non debet corripri ab homine, sed a Domino quomodocunque peccaverit, videtur mihi implicare quod ipse sit supra Ecclesiam sponsam Christi, et quod ad instar Antechristi figuratur ejus extollentia super Christum. Christus enim, licet impeccabilis, voluit esse subjectus principibus etiam in ablatione suorum temporalium, ut probatur Mat. xvii. Hec est aliqualis responsio ad bullam. Istas Conclusiones dixerim ut granum fidei separatum a palea qua ignitur ingratum lolium quod post florem ruboris vindicte fetentis, parat pabulum contra Scripturas fidei Antechristo. Cujus infallibile est signum quod regnet in Clero venenum luciferinum, superbia consistens in libidine dominandi, cujus conjux terrenorum cupiditas concreet filios Diaboli, extinctis filiis evangelice paupertatis. Judicium vero ubertatis hujus propaginis probatur ex hoc, quod multi etiam filii paupertatis degeneres foveant loquendo, vel tacendo partem Luciferi, non valentes aut non audentes propter semen hominis peccati injectum in cordibus, aut timorem servilem de amissione temporalium, stare pro evangelica paupertate.*

k Sic MS.
pro Cestren-
sis in sua
Policratica.

Hec sunt Conclusiones quas vult etiam usque ad mortem defendere, ut per hoc valeat mores ecclesie reformare.

No. XVII.

Conclusiones Magistri Joannis Wycliff contentæ in Scheda inclusa Literis Papalibus dat. Junii 11, 1377.

1. TOTUM genus ¹ hominum concurrentium citra Christum non habet potestatem ² simpliciter ordinandi, ut Petrus, et omne genus suum domine-
tur politice imperpetuum super mundum.

2. Deus non potest dare homini pro se et heredibus suis imperpetuum civile dominium.

3. Cartæ humanitus adinventæ de ³ hæreditate civili olim perpetua sunt impossibiles.

4. Quilibet existens in gratia ⁴ gratificante finaliter nedum habet jus, sed in re habet omnia Dei.

5. Homo potest solum ministratorie dare tam naturali ⁵ filio quam imitationis in schola Christi, tam temporale dominium quam æternum.

6. Si Deus est, Domini temporales possunt legitime ac meritorie auferre bona fortunæ ab Ecclesia delinquente. Deest apud Walsingh.

7. ⁶ Nunquid Ecclesia est in tali statu vel non, est meum discutere, sed dominorum temporalium examinare, et posito casu confidenter agere, et in pœna damnationis æternæ ejus temporalia auferre.

8. Scimus quod non est possibile quod Vicarius Christi pure ex bullis suis, vel ex illis cum ⁷ voluntate et consensu suo ⁸ et sui Collegii quendam habilitet vel inhabilitet.

9. Non est possibile hominem excommunicari nisi ⁹ prius et principaliter excommunicaretur a seipso.

10. ¹⁰ Nemo ad sui deteriorationem excommunicatur suspenditur, vel aliis censuris cruciatur, nisi in causa Dei.

11. Maledictio vel excommunicatio, non ligat simpliciter, nisi quantum fertur in adversarium legis Christi.

12. Non est ¹¹ exemplificata potestas a Christo ¹² vel suis Discipulis excommunicandi subditos, præcipue propter negationem temporalium, sed e contra.

¹ humanum.

² simplicem.

³ hæreditate perpetua.

⁴ gratum faciente jus ad rem, sed pro suo tempore jus in re super.

⁵ filio imitationis temporale dominium et æternum implicitum.

⁶ Hic totus Articulus deest.

⁷ volitione.

⁸ aut.

⁹ primo.

¹⁰ Nemo debet nisi in causa Dei excommunicare, suspendere, interdicere, vel secundum quamcunque censuram ecclesiasticam vindicando procedere.

¹¹ exemplata.

¹² deest.

13. Discipuli Christi non habent potestatem ¹³ coacte exigere temporalia per censuras.

14. Non est possibile de potentia Dei absoluta, quod si Papa vel ¹⁴ alius prætendat se quovismodo solvere vel ligare, eo ipso solvit vel ligat.

15. Credere debemus quod solum tunc solvit vel ligat, ¹⁵ quando se conformat legi Christi.

16. Hoc debet catholice credi, ¹⁶ quilibet sacerdos rite ordinatus habet potestatem sufficienter Sacramenta quælibet conferendi, et per consequens quemlibet contritum a peccato quolibet absolvendi.

17. ¹⁷ Licet Regibus auferre temporalia a viris Ecclesiasticis ipsis abutentibus habitualiter.

18. ¹⁸ Sive Domini temporales, sive sancti Papæ, sive sancti, sive caput Ecclesiæ, qui est Christus, dotaverint Ecclesiam bonis fortunæ vel gratiæ, et excommunicaverint ejus temporalia auferentes, licet tamen propter conditionem implicitam delicto proportionabili eam temporalibus spoliare.

19. ¹⁹ Ecclesiasticus ymo et Romanus Pontifex potest legitime a subditis et laicis corripì, et etiam accusari.

Istæ fuerunt propositiones vel potius deliramenta sæpediti Johannis, quæ ad aures domini apostolici pervenere.—*Walsingham.*

¹³ ad, coactione civili, exigendum.

¹⁴ alius Christianus.

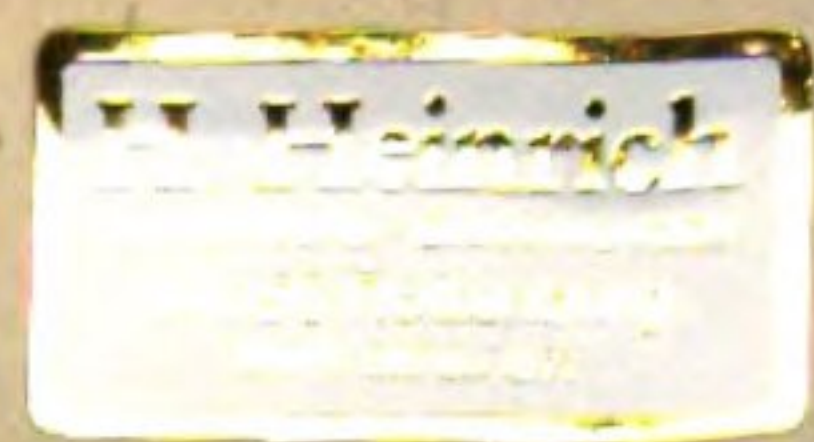
¹⁵ simpliciter vicarius Christi conformiter—

¹⁶ quod quilibet sacerdos rite ordinatus secundum legem gratiæ habet potestatem secundum quam potest sacramenta ministrare, et per consequens sibi confessum de quocunque peccato contritum absolvere.

¹⁷ Licet Regibus in casibus limitatis a Jure—

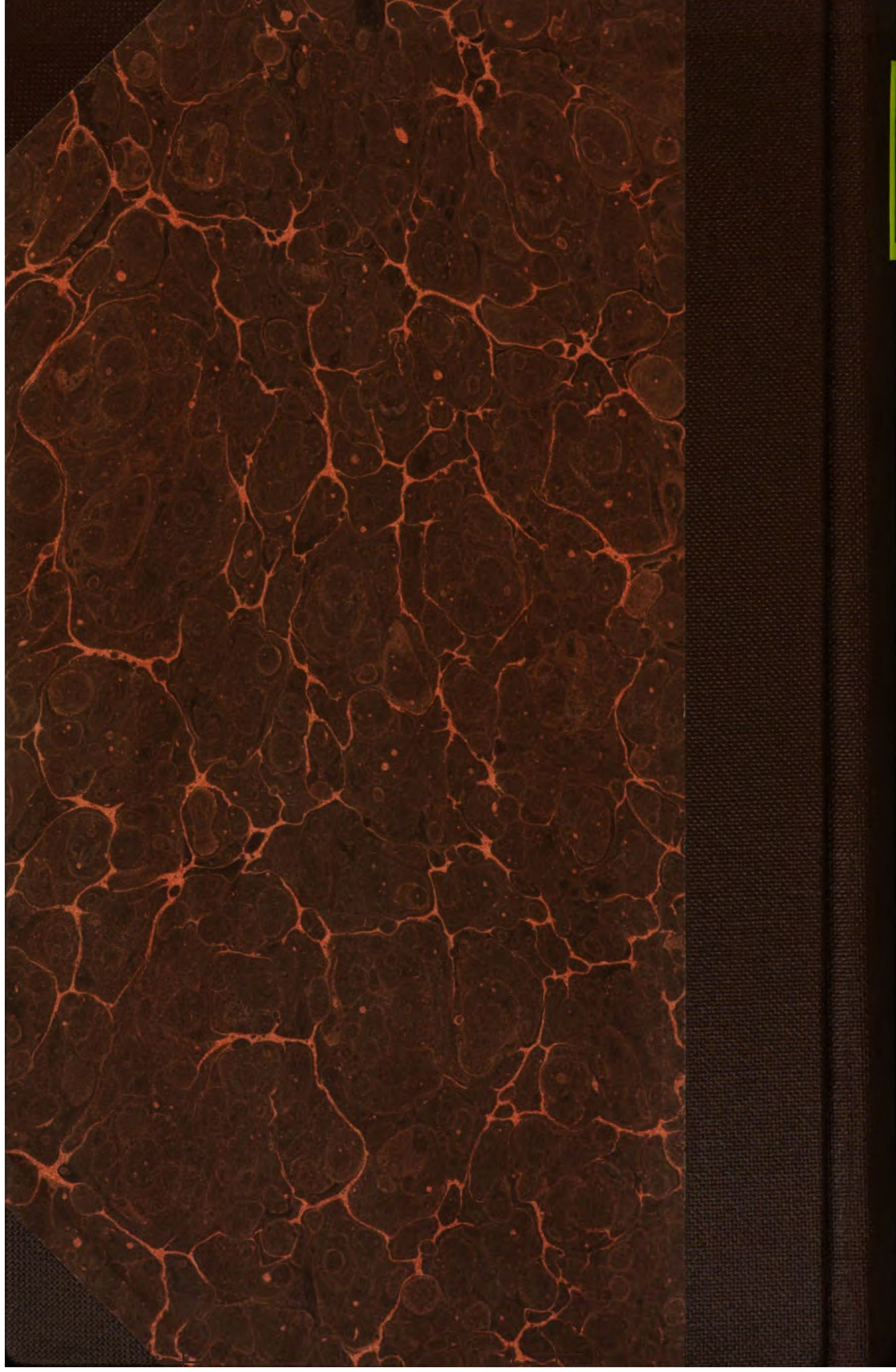
¹⁸ Sive Domini temporales, sive quicumque alii dotaverint Ecclesiam temporalibus, licet eis in casu auferre temporalia medicinaliter ad cavenda peccata, non obstante excommunicatione, vel alia censura ecclesiastica; cum non nisi sub conditione implicita sunt donata.

¹⁹ Ecclesiasticus etiam Romanus Pontifex potest legitime a subditis corripì ad utilitatem Ecclesiæ, et tam a clericis quam a laicis accusari.



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Vaughan, Robert

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